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ENCHANTERS OF MEN

TULLIA D'ARAGONA

From an Old Print

ENCHANTERS OF MEN

BY

ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

WITH TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS book might well have borne as sub-title, A Study in Feminine Magic, *since the women who illumine its pages are alike in only one respect—that each was, after her fashion, an Enchanter of Men. I leave to my readers the decision of the resulting effect. Is it reassuring or disconcerting to the sex which is already growing somewhat wearily sceptical of its secular incomprehensibility, folly, and caprice? Does it, on the other hand, constitute a fresh testimony, or a flat denial, to the equally time-honoured transparency, commonsense, and stability of the Male? I abjure the thorny question. For me, the effect sums itself up in the* cri de cœur *of a naïve friend: "Why is it that whenever one's nice, the other's horrid?" To accept this as a criticism of life were to break the heart at a stroke. We will treat it merely as a criticism of my choice of fair, frail, fascinating—and foreign, ladies. They are nearly all foreign—"and that makes a* tremendous *difference," she added.*

E. C. M.

April, 1909.

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THE ROYAL MISTRESS

DIANE DE POITIERS

1499–1566

DIANE DE POITIERS! The sound seems to have haunted our childhood. "*Il respire comme un parfum de beauté, d'aristocratie, et de puissance*"—and its owner appreciated it to the very last letter. Never was Christian name so exploited before! France, indeed, during the period of Diane's ascendency, fell into a condition of partial moonlessness, for the crescent was the only recognized phase. New moons decorated everything—Diana, "Goddess excellently bright," appeared round every corner: "half-hidden, she seemed merely to await her comrades before flinging herself headlong into the pursuit of the deer and the wild boar."

She was born on September 5th, 1499, the daughter of Jehan de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, and Jehanne de Baternay, his wife. Her very childhood was Dianic. At six, she rode and hunted with her father; at ten, she was promised in marriage to Louis de Brézé, Grand-Seneschal of Normandy,* also a hunting-man—and a further blazon was added to the felicitous name.

"Madame Dame Diane de Poitiers, Grande-Sénéschale de Normandie": it sounded well, but it did not look so well as it sounded, for Brézé was one of the ugliest men of his time. He had a hump; and he was thirty years older than his bride, when the marriage took place in 1515—Diane being then fifteen, and he, forty-three. "Marriage," in those days, "was a transaction,

* He was descended illegitimately from King Charles VIII., his mother being a daughter of Agnes Sorel.

a business-partnership . . . it excluded every idea of personal fancy ; indeed, of all the contracts of life, marriage was the least tolerant of any such notion. Its traditional character as a business-affair no one would have dreamed of contesting." *

Diane accepted marriage in that guise for nine years, and presented the Grand-Seneschal with two daughters ; then began the movement and the change. She came to Court in the train of Louise of Savoy, mother of Francis I. ; and the French Court at that time was something like a Court to come to !

The reign of Francis was the last reflection of the age of chivalry. The flower of French knighthood surrounded him—names which thrill us even now as we read. La Trémouille ; Chabannes, Seigneur de la Palisse ; Pierre de Terrail—otherwise the Chevalier Bayard ; Anne de Montmorency (as what a perfect masculine appellation does " Anne " suddenly strike us !), Gaston de Foix, Lautrec. . . . Beautiful names, as beautiful as her own—bravery, brilliancy, ancient and glorious lineage, are implicit in every one ; and she, who had so fine an ear for that kind of thing, dated perhaps her championship of old chivalric ways as against the new scholarly and philosophical dissensions, from the moment in which those exquisite syllables first enthralled her hearing.

When, in 1533, her husband died and she began the career of magnificent mistress, it was as the result of a long-pondered, subtly-devised scheme of conquest. After the Peace of Cambrai, (1528) the two Royal children, Francis the Dauphin, and Henry, Duke of Orleans, were liberated from durance in Spain as hostages for French good behaviour. Francis and the Court met them at Bayonne ; at Bordeaux and Amboise there were feasts and tournaments to celebrate the King's marriage with Éléonore, widowed Queen of Portugal, and sister of Charles V. The young Duke of Orleans there broke his first lance in honour of Diane, who was thirty-one. A tender scene had already taken place between them. At Bayonne, the Grande-Sénéschale had drawn him to her and put her arms around him, mother-wise. All the emotion of the moment was in the lad's heart : the return to France (and what does not that mean to a Frenchman !),

* R. de Maulde la Clavière. *Les Femmes de la Renaissance.*

the remembrance of trouble proudly borne, the feeling of loneliness—for had not his father always favoured his elder brother? "I don't care for dreamy, sullen, sleepy children," he had said, speaking of his second son. . . . And now, the sensitive child was drawn into these beautiful, sheltering arms! He began from that hour the dream which ended only with his life. He was never away from her afterwards. "It was even said that the little Eros which Primaticcio placed beside Diane in his admirable portrait, was drawn from Henry."

Seventeen years between them—and a superstitious time: to what was this infatuation sure to be attributed? To witchcraft —*envoûtement*: "we are not in a real world," says picturesque Michelet. But it was very real indeed to Diane de Poitiers. Even her magic, her sorceries, were positive. That "mysterious and sinister beauty" was preserved by the simplest, the most practical means: an active, healthy life! She used to get up at 5 a.m. and take a cold bath. That in itself was then a marvel. Personal cleanliness was rare; the fame of her morning-baths has come down to us through the centuries in many a naive, astounded page. To make such eccentricity credible, the only way was to add a further touch of the amazing—hence she was said to bathe in cold water filled with crushed gold. . . . After the legendary "tub," Diane would ride, would hunt for two or three hours, then would come back and go to bed, where she would spend the morning, reading the romances of the time—the chivalric romances above all—besides books of astrology of history. "Her meals were light but substantial." It was a *régime*, in short, and no sorcery at all; and Guiffry * is concerned to prove to us not only that this was so, but that her beauty was a very debatable question. We must turn, for the truth about it, away from what he calls the mythological group, to the historic one—"the human Diane, the Diane of this grovelling world"; and among these images we shall not find that impression of divine beauty, of superhuman grace, which reigns in the other section. She had a brilliant complexion, and her cold-water *régime* enhanced it; for the rest, the distinctive character of her aspect was health, not loveliness. She had

* The undisputed expert on her history.

broad shoulders, an opulent throat, "the flesh enriched by pulsing blood" . . . and Henry, who lost his head so entirely about her in everything else, seems not at first to have deceived either himself or her on this point. "Non la beauté—qui un léger courage Peut émouvoir—tant que vous peut me plaire," he wrote to her in the quite early days, and no doubt the ambiguous compliment was as dubiously welcome as it would be to any other woman. Perhaps it incited her to that multiplication of her image, that loud tradition of her beauty, which she exacted in her magnificent days from her sculptors and her poets.

Party-feeling had something to do with Diane's relation to the young Prince. France was in a transition-state. Calvinism was rampant; the country was hopelessly divided. The Duchesse d'Étampes, that powerful mistress of Francis I., protected the "half-Huguenot" party, and gave shelter to the philosophers and scholars—the upholders of classical learning; Diane, on the other hand, was for the old ways, the ways of the Middle Ages: "that great civilization, which had its own art, its own faith, its epic poems, its heroes." Her favourite book was the *Roman de la Rose*, that superb chivalric romance, "*où tout est en dehors du possible*"; hence she was wedded to the Catholic faith, for she considered that that faith stirred up and encouraged chivalry. She was bigoted, too, while most of the women around her were tolerant. Marguerite de Valois, the sister of the King, for this reason did not love Diane; *her* wide, philosophical mind was incapable of bigotry, her sensitive spirit shrank from the horrors of the time—for the persecution of the Huguenots was now beginning. . . . But the Reformation never took, never could have taken, firm root in France; and with its long train of dissensions, persecutions, and useless hideous tragedies, it annihilated diplomatic action, and spoilt the brilliant future of the country for many years to come.

Diane de Poitiers, that most capable thinker and ardent Frenchwoman, no doubt saw and felt this profoundly; but there is ever a personal motive with women, and that was supplied for her by her rivalry with the Royal mistress. This lady was not quite pretty, but she was divinely fresh—oddly, in that, resembling her rival; and the resemblance went further,

for she also was an intrepid huntress. A cold, capricious woman, jealous and vindictive, she hated Diane with all the force of her being. She was several years younger than the Grande-Sénéschale, and she found a rending phrase to mark the difference. "*J'étais née le même jour que Madame la Sénéschale s'est mariée.*" Unforgivable—and unforgiven, as we shall see. She had another weapon to hand in the shape of a Court poet, the famous Clément Marot. This gentleman had such leanings towards Calvinism as suited with an easy, pleasure-loving temperament, evasive of fast and penance, and with an exquisite knack of turning the Psalms of David into verse. The Duchesse d'Étampes encouraged him to satirize the Grande-Sénéschale, to make epigrams upon her "obsolete coquetries," her rouge, her false teeth, false hair. . . . Calumnies all, for powders and pomades were unknown to Diane, and paint she utterly despised. The epigrams annoyed her, nevertheless; and when Marot did the subtlest thing of his life, and wrote that spiteful, dainty stanza—

"Que voulez-vous, Diane bonne,
Que vous donne?
Vous n'eustes, comme j'entends,
Jamais tant d'heur au printemps
Qu'en autonne"—

the cleverly insulted lady registered the affront as one to be paid back to the poet's patroness when the day should come—as come it did, with its vengeance. . . . Thus both intellect and enmity impelled her to that close alliance with the Guises and the Montmorencys, which later on brought France into such seas of trouble.

It was during the captivity of Francis I. at Madrid that the power of the House of Lorraine began. François, Comte de Guise—afterwards Duc de Guise, by Diane's influence—was "the proudest and bravest feudal noble that ever was." Paris used periodically to go mad about him, and as he won back Calais for France in 1552—thus effacing the last trace of Edward III. of England's conquests—we can hardly wonder if in that year Paris wore the cap and bells. He was very unlike his baneful brother, Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine, "whose ambition was to set

households by the ears all over France." That often seems, to the profane, to have been the ambition of every Cardinal in those days. No sooner does a Prince of the Church arrive upon the scene—and no scene was ever long without one—than every kind of trouble arrives too. The word "Cardinal" is a veritable stormy petrel.

Anne de Montmorency, Diane's other ally, was not so much the expression of Roman Catholicism, as of high-and-dry feudalism. She quarrelled with him in after years—he was Catherine de' Medici's bosom friend—and though, at Henry's request, she made a partial reconciliation, they were never really anything but hostile all the rest of their lives.

In 1533, Madame la Grande-Sénéschale became a widow. She altered her colours from green-and-white to black-and-white, and Henry wore the sombre livery of her mourning all the rest of his life. The comicality of this is irresistible. It is Platonism again: that amusing, pliant theory, which translated itself with such facility into every kind of practice!

The year was a memorable one for Henry. Diane, a widow; his brother, the Dauphin, dead; he himself, now Dauphin, married —all in 1533. What manner of man was he, whom Diane de Poitiers governed?

"He had neither the vivacity nor the capacity of his father, but he had his own peculiar charm," says Théodore de Bézé; "more like his maternal ancestor, Louis XII., than like Francis I., he seemed born to be governed, not to govern." Until his father's death, in 1547, it may be said that no one knew what Henry was, except Diane de Poitiers. It was she who revealed him to himself. Silent, morose, sensitive, ill-at-ease, she found him; she made him into a lover, a poet, and a king. He leant upon her absolutely; even in public, he never made a decision without first glancing at her for counsel; and she influenced him not by her sagacity alone, but by her versatile knowledge, her power of understanding life at every point, and of using her comprehension to the best advantage.

At twenty-three, Henry was "passing comely." "He has vivid black eyes, a big nose, a rather common mouth, and a pointed beard of two fingers' length: the whole *ensemble* of his

countenance is extraordinarily winning." "Neither stout nor thin, well-knit, one would think he was all made of muscle. . . . Rarely doth he laugh, or give sign of laughter." At twenty-eight, Marino Cavalli reports that he is "robust, melancholic, well skilled in the use of arms. No *beau-diseur* in repartees, but most clear-cut and firm in his opinions. Intelligence not of the readiest, and yet it is such men as he who often succeed best." "Gentle, facile, and reserved; brave and warlike, loving horses, the *jeu de paume*, hunting, skating" . . . altogether, a man who counted, an attractive, lovable man, and one to whom the dual destiny of many men arrived—that of being dominated by the woman he loved, while the woman who loved him was afraid of him.

Catherine de' Medici, whom he married in October, 1533, never won him for a moment away from Diane. She did not try. Directly she came to France, she saw how matters stood;* and inured though women were to the institution by the husband of *la dame de ses pensées*, the strange, imperturbable Florentine lady found it wounding almost to the limits of endurance. But she did endure it—in that subtle silence which was her way of being proud. The thing was not to be altered. No finger of hers, then, should be guilty of the blunder of putting itself in contact with the immovable. Suffer while she must, and above all suffer silently; avenge when she can, with no futile hurry towards the glorious hour—but with it, avenge quickly! . . . Indifferent she has been called: it is the blunder of a shallow psychologist. Such pride as hers is often thus misread. Gentleness was her armour, an exquisite gentleness, a "supreme elegance"—hiding a force of patience and of hatred as great as ever jealous woman knew She set one definite goal before herself at this time—the winning of her father-in-law's affection. And she won it entirely. Francis I. adored her. He enrolled her in his *Petite Bande*, that troop of pretty women who hunted with him, dined with him, talked with him, led by the Duchesse d'Étampes, from the first an ally of the neglected wife. Marguerite de Valois, too, was good to her—Marguerite did not love the much-advertised Diane.

There is a letter written by Catherine in after years to her

* With a poignant irony, her marriage settlement was drawn up at Anet, where Francis I. was staying with Diane.

daughter, Elizabeth of Spain, which reveals something of her silent anguish at this time. "I was not loved in the way I wished by the King your father, who doubtless honoured me beyond my deserts; but I loved him so much that I was always afraid of him, as you know quite well." And before that she had for once shown her heart in a letter to the Constable de Montmorency, that ally whom Diane drew away from her for a period, and whom Catherine never rested until she got back. "It was not the water that made me ill, so much as not having had any news of the King. . . . I know full well that I must not have the happiness of being near him—which makes me wish that you had my place and I yours so long as the war lasts." Truly it was a mistake for a woman in those days "to mix up the idea of love with marriage!"

Catherine was eighteen, and Diane was thirty-five—Henry only a little older than his wife. The young girl might well have hoped to conquer easily, but, astute and subtle as she was, she probably saw deep into that enduring problem—the spell of the older woman over a man's heart. Henry was of the type which is susceptible of the maturer magic, and the spirit of the age was with him. Not often was the discrepancy so great as between him and his mistress, but in Platonic relations the woman was the more frequently a little the senior of the man. Catherine no doubt poignantly comprehended it all. . . . We may see her, mysterious, "supremely elegant," in the Porbus portrait which hangs between the Pitti Palace and the Uffizzi at Florence: "robed in rose-coloured satin, sewn with pearls, a black train streaming behind, a great jewel glowing at her breast"—a woman of thirty, with her tragic love-story behind her.

In 1543, as she had had no children, Francis meditated her divorce from the Dauphin. Catherine heard of it, and, always in her rôle of gentle effacement towards the Royal family of France, she went to him in tears (she knew he would do anything to dry them!), and said that she had heard of his intention, and would sacrifice herself for the good of the country—would retire to a convent or remain in his service, as he pleased. He

was melted at once. "My daughter, have no doubt, since God hath willed it, that you ought to be my daughter-in-law—and that I would not have it otherwise." They both got their reward, for a year afterwards a son was born ; and between that time and 1555, she presented Henry with ten children.

In 1547, Francis died, and Henry was King. Diane, now Duchesse de Valentinois, arrived at Saint Germain. Her first act was to dismiss the Duchesse d'Étampes from Court. At last she was revenged for the famous phrase, for Marot's intolerable stanza! . . . The Duchesse died a good Protestant, chanting, no doubt, the once fashionable Psalms to the end.

All sorts of changes now took place. The King's Council was remodelled : Guises were everywhere. The Calvinists were in dire alarm, and with reason, for the Duchesse de Valentinois instituted repressive measures at once. In 1549, Henry publicly took a vow to exterminate all Huguenots ; and, incidentally, Diane came in for an unpleasant encounter. A poor journeyman tailor was arrested as a heretic and brought before the King, who, it was thought, would be diverted by his confusion and simplicity. But he bore himself with perfect composure and even dignity. Diane, wishing to take part in the discussion, asked some question, but the "heretic," turning quickly, said to her: "Madame, be satisfied with having poisoned France, and do not mingle your infamy with anything so sacred as God's truth." This was disconcerting. The lady said nothing, neither did any one else. "But some days afterwards, the Duchesse de Valentinois went with the King to enjoy the pastime of seeing the tailor burn at the Porte-Saint-Antoine." . . . Truly, in the words of Imbert de Saint-Amand: "One would say that humanity, instead of kneeling before the Christ, had made a mistake in the Cross, and was adoring the evil-doer who hung beside him."

The great mistress was now at the height of her magnificence and renown. She was a superb art-patron ; but she was no greater in that respect than Catherine de' Medici, though she was much more advertised. One was purely Florentine, the other purely French, in tendency. The artists who worked for Diane were mostly her own countrymen. Germain Pilon ; Jean

Goujon, lyricist in stone; Philibert Delorme, architect and iron-worker, the designer of the famous spiral staircase; Bernard Palissy, divine artist in pottery; the Limousin brothers, with their wondrous enamels; Jean Cousin, stained-glass worker, who filled the windows of her Palace with glory—these were her special favourites; but she patronized, among the Italians, Primaticcio, Del Rosso, and Benvenuto Cellini, who found in her form "a symbol of the Absolute in Beauty." Her adored image was everywhere, invested with an immortality of youth, beauty, and superhuman grace. Anet, the palace which she built on the de Brézé territory, was a veritable Earthly Paradise, "the nonpareil of houses"—*Dianet*, as Ronsard, her special poet, wittily and unforgettably named it.

What a zenith for a woman of forty-eight! The King was her slave, the courtiers her creatures: she was the King's Queen. The Royal Treasury was hers to plunder—and she plundered it as thoroughly well as she did everything else. All her arrangements were sumptuous: no one had such hunting-parties, stables, kennels, dinners. Think of her dinner-table—priceless glass, dinner-service by Benvenuto Cellini, Palissy's vases and dishes! Capefigue tells us of the furnishing of Anet. "It was art carried to an extreme point of severe elegance. The furniture was of ebony and ivory; the hangings were in yellow embossed leather, the sideboards in carved wood, reproducing hunting-scenes in raised gold. The carpets were Eastern; there were dim Venetian mirrors—in the galleries were paintings, pottery, enamels; the chimney-pieces had that perfection of size and proportion which made them like monuments." . . . How one seems to see the superb, glowing place! The King is there, in his doublet of white embroidered with two golden crescents, and the "D.H." interlaced in their famous cypher (two D's back to back which formed an H in the centre, and were bound together by a loop called *le lac d'amour*), a short black-velvet cloak, a black-velvet cap, decorated with one long feather . . . her livery!

> "Plus ferme foy ne fut oncques jurée
> À nouveau prince, ô ma seule Princesse!"

"Rest assured that thou shalt never feel ashamed of giving me

the name of thy servant. Let this be my title for ever." "I cannot live without thee." "Remember him who has never loved, will never love, any one but thee." . . . This lover truly lived in dreams—when we think of him, we echo Michelet without hesitation: "*Nous ne sommes pas dans un monde naturel.*"

But once turn to the inspirer of it all, and reality, actuality, are with us at a bound. Not the legendary nymph of the statues and pictures, but the cool, capable organizer of the whole amazing legend is what we perceive. Things—rare, exquisite, but always *things*—come into our minds with her name. Anet, Chenonceaux—bronzes, statues, medallions: Tangible Art, that is what she stands for. Even pictures seem a little too transcendental. Poetry, despite Ronsard and *Dianet*—poetry and she have no real connection. Music one cannot think of—though she heard much music, for Henry passionately loved it. Never did tradition alter so amazingly with fuller knowledge. "She loved beautiful things, but she loved money before all else." . . . The most actual of women—how did she contrive to keep a man in a life-long trance? If a proof of the intoxicating power of Art were wanting, here is one. She surrounded him with the consummate, he saw loveliness wherever he turned; drunk with beauty we might say he was—dizzy in the rarefied atmosphere of its topmost heights!

This was genius; and the greater, because among the other arts, she never forgot the Art of Life. She amused as well as dazzled him. His enervated nature needed a continual spur; thus, she was not content with making him fall in love—she plunged him in "a perpetual state of ecstasy." . . . Her expenditure was enormous, but the Royal Treasury paid; and she had other ways and means as well. She levied taxes on everything she could in her own domain: one, very profitable, was on the bread-baking ovens in the town. Fines also she instituted: if a Jew trod her ground, he paid twelve *deniers* for the desecration! Gifts of all sorts were exacted. Vieilleville, one of the Marshals of France, had to give from an Abbey he came in for, "table- and bed-linen, very fine and rich, for it came from Flanders—so it *had* to go to Madame de Valentinois, who esteemed it highly, as being a very rare thing." It was

only with difficulty that Vieilleville had got his Abbey at all: "*à vive force, et, comme l'on dict, son corps deffendant, le Roy fict cette avantaige à M. de Vieilleville.*" Henry was obliged, indeed, to tell some lies about it, so as "to escape the insatiable avidity of those three harpies"—the harpies being the Constable Montmorency, the Marshal Saint-André, and Madame de Valentinois—"who, all the morning, had (unknown to one another) pursued, importuned, and hag-ridden (*chevalé*) His Majesty so as to snap up this benefice." Saint-André, for that matter, had had his own troubles of the same sort. When he had applied for a vacant Marshalship, Diane had fought him tooth and nail. She wanted the post for her son-in-law, and she told the King that if she did not get it, she would leave the kingdom. "*Et tant d'autre langaige!*" as poor Saint-André said miserably to his friend Vieilleville. He was downcast at the opposition of the dread lady, since "*de la malcontenter, le Roy ne voudroit pour rien l'entreprendre*"; and Vieilleville gave him little hope, advised him, on the contrary, to abandon hope at once, for if he went on, he would be putting himself "*entre l'ongle et la chair.*" The metaphor had force. Saint-André decided to wait for his Marshalship!

It is clear from all this that Diane was unpopular. Henry was "excused": his people were indulgently fond of him.

"Le peuple excuse Henri,
Maudit Montmorenci,
Haït Diane,
Surtout ceux de Guise aussi."

The long magnanimity of the injured Queen was gaining her sympathy, though the courtiers and even the people still acquiesced in the official scandal. All the towns of the kingdom, when the King visited them, raised triumphal arches whereon the symbolic cypher of the Duchesse de Valentinois shone beside the Royal one. Even at Catherine's coronation, it appeared. How the wife must have loathed the sight of it! She had verily a hard ordeal—for Diane forced an intimacy upon her with that deadly resolution which she used in all things. It was a triangle—"and the mistress formed in some sort the apex of it." Her influence actually extended to the

alcove; Contarini, in one of his inimitable despatches, wrote that "the Queen is continually with the Duchess, who, on her side, does her many a good turn with the King—*et souvent c'est elle qui l'exhorte à aller dormir auprès de la Reine.*" Even more extraordinary is the intervention of the mistress with the Royal children. Diane was the "tutelary genius of the family." She presided at the births, she chose the nurses, fixed the time for weaning, recommended the medicines—in a word, managed everything.

So, for thirteen years, the strange three-sided life went on. Everywhere the "D and H," everywhere the Goddess Dian and the crescent moon—and that dark mysterious lady, Catherine the Wife, silently biding her time. But the Court was delightful, and even Catherine enjoyed it. She loved to laugh: "she laughed her fill," says Brantôme, "for she liked a good joke; and she delighted in saying a witty thing, and making a sharp repartee. She knew well how to do it; she never missed an opportunity." And the beautiful palaces rose up everywhere, till the Loire country was like fairyland. Amboise, "supreme in the list of perched places";* Chenonceaux, "that enchanting caprice," like a miniature Venice, with its lakes and ponds where swam stately swans and carps with golden collars—a love-gift from Henry to his *seule princesse*; Blois, "flowering, laughing, living"; Chambord, immense, yet so light and graceful, with its spiral staircase and its square pavilions—and Anet above all, Anet, wondrous and to us for ever but a dream, for it was ruined by a Revolutionary mob in 1799.

Thirteen years of that—and then, at last, Catherine's revenge!

It was at Paris, in the summer of 1559. The occasion was a double wedding. Henry's daughter Elizabeth was being married to Philip II. of Spain, and his sister Margaret to the Duke of Savoy. The celebration was on June 28th, and there was a three-days' *Tournoi* in honour of it. In the Rue Saint-Antoine, near the Bastille, the lists were set. It was the usual glittering scene; but the heart of Catherine was heavy. Her

* Henry James. *A Little Tour in France.*

astrologer had read a terrible augury: one of the three tourneys was to prove fatal to the King.

At dawn, on the opening day, she implored him not to risk his life—she pleaded as she did not often plead: she saw him so seldom, for pleading or anything else! But it was useless. Did not his *seule princesse* prize valour in the lists beyond aught else? He would enter.

The first day went by, and all was well. He laughed at Catherine's fears.

"Ah! Sire, I fear for two days more," she answered.

The second day, Henry was still victorious and unhurt. Catherine was half-consoled—the astrologer might have blundered.

But the last day . . . Towards the end, a tall knight rode into the lists, wearing the well-known black-and-white. It was Henry on his favourite horse, "Le Turc"; and three times that day he was again triumphant. But then old Vieilleville went up to him. Another augury? Yes: Vieilleville had had a dream of evil omen. "The King waved impatiently." He challenged Montgomery, Captain of the Scotch Guards, ordering him to arm and mount. They met—and the weapon of Montgomery, passing the King's guard, broke against his armour. But Henry only reeled, was not unhorsed. A great feat: murmurs of applause went round. But soon the murmurs deepened: horror sounded in the voices, terror was fixed upon the faces. As the knights crossed the arena, it was seen that the broken lance had come in violent contact with the King's vizor. A splinter had got in behind the plates; it had entered his eye. He fell to the ground. Montgomery stood dazed and motionless. . . . Was it treason? regicide? No one has ever known. . . . The King lay on the ground, surrounded by courtiers, and Catherine was by his side—in her rightful place at last.

Diane was left almost alone. The Court—so quick, so cruel?—stood aloof. For twenty years she had been his *seule princesse;* but his Queen was with him then. . . . She never saw him after that day. She humbled her pride: she begged Catherine to grant her one visit. Catherine refused. It was

hard punishment, even for that long insult. Too hard—yes; but revenge is very sweet.

Shortly before the end, the Queen ordered Madame de Valentinois to restore the Crown-jewels, and to leave Paris at once.

"*Le roi est mort?*" asked the mistress.

He would not live through the day, they told her.

And she replied, "*Je n'ai donc point encore de maître. Tant qu'il restera à Sa Majesté un doigt de vie, je ne crains pas mes ennemis; et après sa mort, j'aurai trop de chagrin pour sa perte pour sentir les insultes qu'on voudra me faire.*" That was a fair reply!

He died on July 10, 1559, eleven days after the Tournament. Catherine de' Medici and the Duc de Guise were appointed Regents. Catherine's first action was to order Madame de Valentinois to renounce the Castle of Chenonceaux, and—again—to leave Paris immediately.

But Diane still had *Dianet*. That was irrevocably hers. Thither she retired, leaving the French Court for ever—there where stood

> "Partout le marbre en arabesque
> À garder l'hommage éclatant
> Du dernier roi chevaleresque
> Et du seul monarque constant."

She lived at Anet in entire seclusion until April 25, 1566, when she died, sixty-six years and eight months old. A great funeral was held, attended by half the nobility of France; a hundred poor persons, dressed in white, carried torches and told beads: "*Priez Dieu pour Diane de Poitiers.*"

Jean Goujon carved her bust for the gorgeous tomb, which remained at Anet till 1799, when the Revolutionists destroyed the Palace. Her remains were exposed to view, then thrown into a hastily-dug grave near the Chapel. The tomb has been scattered piecemeal in the various museums of France.

Did she love Henry? She was ambitious, cold, and calculating; wild for luxury and power; avid, avaricious, tenacious. . . . With all these things, not even our modern paradox-mongers have as yet enjoined us to associate romance. If he

had not been King, would she have loved him? Of few Royal mistresses can that question be answered. He was very lovable —if she could have loved any one, she might well have loved him. But, if she had, she could not have governed him so despotically. She kept her head too perfectly all through! . . . "*Diane ne veut pas vieillir, et elle ne vieillit pas.*" Michelet thus interprets for us her secret of eternal youth: "It was never to be moved by anything, to care for anything, to pity anything."

That is a hard saying. But Guiffry, in many a penetrating page, has much the same judgment to deliver. Physiognomist, graphologist, he reads her face and her handwriting with pitiless clairvoyance. "Those eyes, ever-watchful (*sans cesse aux aguets*), whose intelligent cupidity seems always fixed upon the object of her desire—they grow with age, as if to embrace a larger field for that insatiable greed." They were imperious too. "In her look at Henry, there was at once an order, and the reward for obedience." The great eyes were one of her great spells. The mouth had thin, close lips—"the lips for orders and caprices, rather than for sweet caressing words." A disdainful line was at each corner, "showing defiance of obstacles, contempt for the rules of justice and honesty." . . . And her letters, he says, echo her face. The style is arid, the words are precise and rigorously reasonable. These are her business-letters. We have none of her letters of love. Henry's remain, but not hers. It was then obligatory to burn all important letters, and lovers were especially careful, whatever pain the holocaust might give them.* "Her love-letters are sure to have been calculated productions," Guiffry remarks; and gives us forthwith a brilliant

* Marot has an exquisite little poem about a burning of this sort—

"Aulcunes foys au feu je la boutoye
Pour la brusler; puis soubdain l'en ostoye;
Puis l'y remis, et puis l'en recullay,
Mais à la fin (à regret) la bruslay,
En disant: 'Lettre' (après l'avoir baisée)
'Puisqu'il lui plaist, tu sera embrasée:
Car j'ayme mieulx dueil, en obeyssant,
Que tout plaisir en désobeyssant':
Voila comment pouldre et cendre devint
L'ayse plus grand qu'à moy oncques advint."

DIANE DE POITIERS

From an Old Print

display of graphology. "Tall, broad letters, well-placed, they take possession of the paper at once—no hesitation in will or hand. The signature confirms all this ; the name is placed at the end of the written thoughts, like a radiant, magic word!" He compares her handwriting with Henry's: "*Pauvre petite écriture grêle et toute craintive!*" No need, he says, to ask which was master.

She is well hated by her chroniclers, this lady with the jet-black hair and the wonderful white slender hands! All the glamour has not dazzled *them.* Guiffry is even ready to point out where the wrinkles were coming when she should permit them to come. . . .

But one thing we must remember. Not only did she dazzle, did she rule, her King—most great mistresses have achieved so much. Her distinction is to have made him radiantly and exquisitely happy: Anet was literally the Earthly Paradise to the lover of Diane de Poitiers. Let the destined Royal victims of all ages testify to the rarity of that!

BIANCA CAPELLO

1548–1587

TO interest one's-self in the study of the life and death of Bianca Capello is to realize afresh the imperishable inaccuracy of history. The spelling of her name, the dates of her birth and death, the manner of her famous flight, her death, her burial—everything that can be disputed is disputed, through book upon book, note upon note, till the brain whirls and the pen staggers.

The following of the picturesque biographers is an almost irresistible temptation, for many of the fictions are excellently imagined; but the historic conscience, already stirred from lethargy by her much-documented German chronicler, Siebenkees, is awakened to feverish activity by the still later researches of Emanuele Cigogna, who destroys ruthlessly the greater number of the fairy-tales which have sprung up like bindweed round the mere stark truth.

The choice must be made; and Cigogna, with his endless documents, inevitably comes off victorious. But he is the Spirit that Denies; he shall come in, like Browning's Galuppi, "with his cold music, till we creep through every nerve." . . .

And we will have our story too!

Bianca Capello was the daughter of Bartolomeo Capello, nobleman and senator of Venice, and was born in 1548. Her father was a Member of the Council; her uncle, Grimani, was Patriarch of Aquilea—a dignity never held but by a nobleman. This Grimani was the step-maternal uncle; her own mother was dead, and she had for some time lived without any feminine

supervision. She had made bad use of her liberty: "she took to freer habits of life than were usual among Venetian damsels." The advent of a stepmother, unwelcome always, was therefore particularly unwelcome to her. At fifteen, she was already very beautiful. Her face was handsome and proud—"but the pride was tempered by a sort of remote melancholy, which paled her cheeks and clouded her great sad eyes." She was fretting, in fact, under the new bondage—sulking about the cruel stepmother. It is like the beginning of a fairy-tale; and, sure enough, there arrives Prince Charming, in the person of a clerk at the great Banking-House of the Salviati, those Florentine *richissimes*, who had a branch-office in Venice. Prince Charming's name was Pietro Bonaventuri—young, handsome, and very amorous. He saw her—"and to see her, and to fall violently in love with her, were the same thing for him. The pen fell from his hands, so did the account-books; all that ordinarily interests mankind here below became intolerable to him; life itself seemed insufferable without her." At last they met. Eyes had often met already. One of the demolished fables is that of the Salviati Bank and the Capello Palace having been opposite to one another. It would be charming to believe, but Cigogna will have none of it. "This is a grave error," says the inexorable man. The houses were in a straight line; "not even," adds Trollope the Puck-like, "within glanceshot." Love, none the less, found out the way. The only chance of speaking to the now well-guarded girl was when she went to church. Her maid was with her even then, but maids exist to be suborned, and this one did not struggle long against her fate. Soon all was arranged. There were the usual properties—false keys, midnight meetings, the moonlight and the dawnlight. . . . "The damsel would escape in the heart of the night to visit her Pietro." Thus Galluzzi, a Jesuit writer, who has no leaning in her favour. He continues, with the ruthless Italian plain-speaking: "This could not of course go on for long in tranquillity. There came the fruits of love, and the consequent terror of the young parents."

The young parents, terrified indeed, fled from Venice across the Apennines to Florence, the home of Bonaventuri, on the

night of the 28th–29th November, 1563—Bianca being then about sixteen years old.

It seems, when reading the chronicles of those days, as if no matrimonial adventure of any kind—open or clandestine—could possibly be undertaken except in the depth of winter. The Sentimentalists, struck also no doubt by the singular choice of date, invented the prettiest of their fairy-tales to account for it. We may call it the Story of the Baker's Boy.

According to this fantasy, it was at early dawn that pretty Bianca used to steal out to meet *il suo Pietro*, leaving the Palace-door ajar so that she could get back unobserved. On the fatal morning, she had left the heavy portal just as usual . . . but the Goddess of Mischance had been dared once too often; to-day it was her turn, and she selected as her instrument an innocent baker's boy, going his rounds with the sunrise to awaken the housemaids and servants so that the bread might be prepared for his master's ovens. He saw the Capello door ajar—and shut it tight. His intentions were of the best. Nothing should be stolen or carried away from the Palace if he could prevent it. Something *was* carried away that early morning—that something being the terrified little daughter of the house! Nothing, outside that shut door, was left but instant flight, since discovery meant lifelong imprisonment in a cloister for her, and summary vengeance of the family upon her lover.

It would be diverting to believe in the Baker's Boy also. Once more it may not be. Cigogna will have none of him. "The flight was premeditated," he sternly remarks; and other historians support him, giving as their reason a circumstance which he rejects! Bianca, in a word, is said to have carried with her all the jewels and silver plate that she could lay her hands on.

Whether she did that or not, there is no doubt that the flight had been arranged. Very dramatic, with the drama of paleography, is the evidence for this. In one of the twelve million volumes of the Archives of Venice there is a page upon which certain passages have been blotted out. Opposite to them, in the margin, stands a Latin inscription: "*Obliterated by order of the Council of Ten.*" The volume is a register of criminal processes for the year 1563. . . . But the Terrible Ten have been

foiled, the secret is discovered; for the obliteration was not efficiently done! Instead of cutting away the passage, the persons responsible merely "drew a pen filled with different ink across the lines"—and so the paleographer triumphed.

The passage thus erased was an indictment against Pietro Bonaventuri for that he, "with hateful insolence and disrespect for the nobles of Venice," had abducted Bianca, daughter of Bartolomeo Capello, knowing her to be the heir to no mean fortune, "she being deceived by many lies and having scarce completed her sixteenth year." Follows a judgment of death against him if he be arrested. Bartolomeo Capello offers a reward for his production, alive or dead. Judgment is also given against Maria Donati, a serving-maid who had aided in the flight. . . . We shall see, later on, why the Ten desired thus to bury the past.

There remains no question, then, that handsome Pietro was a scoundrel. He was a poor clerk, of no birth and no prospects; she was a considerable heiress; and he had given her to understand that he belonged to the powerful Salviati family. All may be fair in love, but that all is fair in marriage is more debatable. What can have been the feelings of the girl when at last, after the terrible journey, she got to Florence, and to the house of "her Pietro's" parents? It was a wretched hut in the Piazza di San Marco! By the time they arrived, they were married—had been married by a friendly priest in a village near Bologna—so it was too late for repentance, though this might well have been the place sought carefully with tears.

Her child was born very soon after her instalment. The old people were grindingly poor—so poor that on their son's arrival with his bride, the first thing that had to be done was to dismiss their one servant: impossible to retain her now that there were two more mouths to feed. Mother Bonaventuri was too old to work, so the young daughter-in-law, on her recovery, had to perform all the menial offices of the household. Noble (an adoring Reverend biographer) tells us, with tears in his pen, that she even took in washing. Poetic justice had well overtaken Master Pietro, for he had lost of course his clerkly salary, and Bianca's fortune of six thousand crowns, inherited from her mother, was

declared to be confiscated. They were obliged, moreover, to court obscurity, for Bonaventuri was furiously pursued by the Capello family. The stepmother was angriest of all—"*s'irritò sopra tutti*"—at the insult to the houses of Capello and Grimani. It is the way of stepmothers, and this one had an exceptional degree of power as well as of anger. Her brother was Patriarch of Aquilea; through him she obtained a decree against the whole family of Bonaventuri, so that Pietro's uncle, accused of connivance, was arrested and imprisoned in a subterranean dungeon. He died there of intermittent fever. The maid, Maria Donati, was also done to death. Finally Pietro and Bianca were banished as outlawed robbers.

Thus she lived for a time, while all Italy was ringing with the scandal—all Italy—and more significantly, all Florence. For it soon became known that the notorious couple were in Florence, and among those most interested by the news was Francesco de' Medici, not yet actually Grand Duke of Tuscany, since his father Cosmo was still alive; but practically ruler, for Cosmo had resigned all power into his hands. The Florentine Court was at this time a scene of dissipation and licence, crimes and murders, intrigues and basenesses of all sorts. Francesco himself must have been an unattractive person. "He can scarcely," comments Trollope, "be considered sane." He was terribly moody; his brow was for ever black with gloom; he had occasional fits of appalling violence. "His ignorance of right and wrong was far deeper, far more dangerous and more perverse, than that of a savage." Moderation in anything he was unacquainted with, and indeed, when we read the details of his every-day life, we cease to wonder at his behaviour. His food, for instance! Everything he ate was mixed with the most fiery condiments, ginger, pepper, nutmeg, cloves; and "before, during, and after these meals," he would swallow raw eggs, filled with red pepper. But that was not all. His second choice in eatables was raw onions, radishes, any roots, in fact (the anathematized "anything that grows underground" of modern diet-experts!), together with "enormous quantities of the strongest cheese." Discomforting enough, in the mere recital—and we find that when Francesco had had his fill of these dainties, he

would drink immense beakers of iced water, plunge his head and hands in snow, and go to bed in iced sheets! The last delight was "his constant habit," says Soderini. "And this he did in imitation of Prospero Colonna and other notable men," for Francesco was of the parrot-class of humans—he loved to plagiarize other men's originalities. He was more learned than Cosmo, but inferior as a statesman; his outlook was narrow, and by his treatment of affairs he depreciated the prestige of the Grand Duchy, and made of Tuscan history a mere municipal record. On the other hand, he was the patron of the best artists; it is to him that the Florentine picture-galleries owe much of their splendour. He tried to revive the art of Ceramics, but was unsuccessful; with Mosaics he had better fortune, and they reached their highest perfection in his time. He was born in 1541, seven years before Bianca, with whom Destiny was now waiting to link his life.

Francesco had heard the story with which Italy was ringing, and had no doubt heard also of the lady's beauty. A Medici was not likely to leave unsatisfied for long such curiosity as all this must have aroused; but there were difficulties, for the young Bonaventuri bride preserved a strict seclusion, due not only to the dangers of discovery, but to the even more cogent reason that she had nothing to wear. And now—the Sentimentalists enter, in full cry! There is a story of a procession, a Grand Duke riding beneath a window, an exquisite woman's face looking down upon him . . . a lingering retreat, a turned eager head; then, a resolute admirer, a modest and ungetatable beauty, a Spanish tutor and his rascally go-between of a wife. . . . Biondelli's account of this "Mondragone Episode" is too amusing to be passed over—but be it remembered that Biondelli, not so sentimental as Larousse, Sanseverino, and Rose, is nevertheless easily first in unveracity.

The Marchesa Mondragone, then, approaches Mother Bonaventuri as the messenger of her husband, who is attached closely to the Court and has Francesco's ear. Does not the mournful bride desire this powerful aid for herself and husband? ("Thus did human malice, which knows no bounds," sighs Litta, in his stupendous work, *Celebre Famiglie*, "contrive to make its own

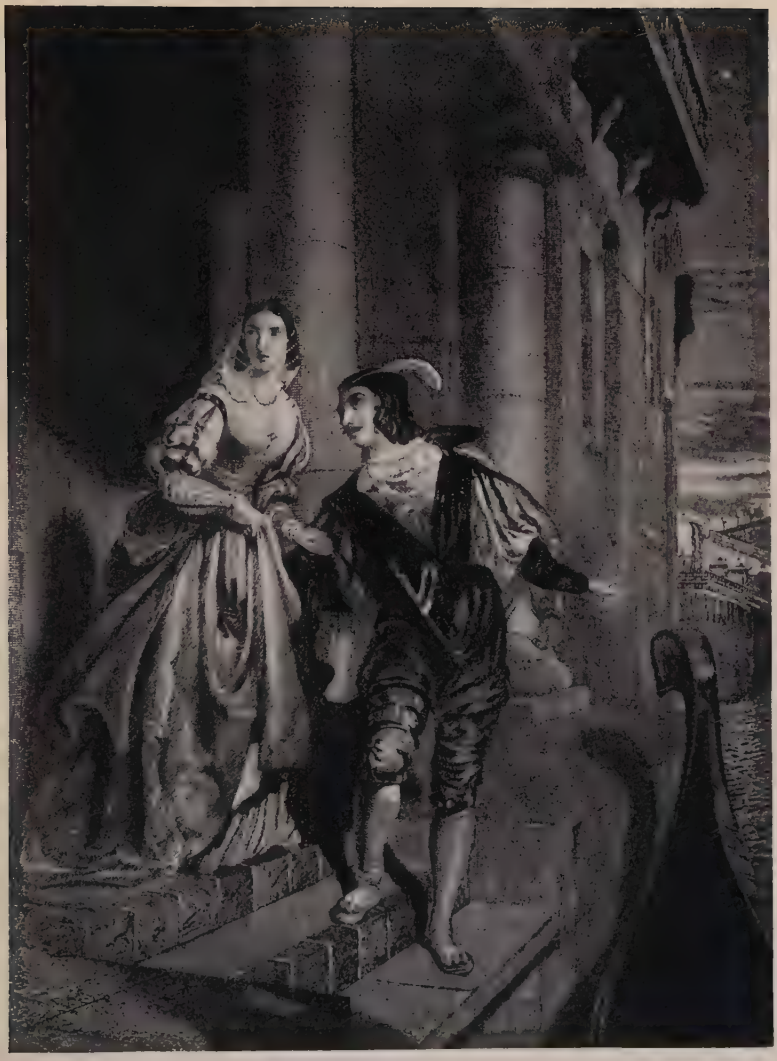
use of Bianca's very love for her husband!") The old lady answers bluntly that it is little good asking her daughter-in-law to go to Court, for she has no clothes and is too poor to get any. But the smiling Marchesa will lend her something! The bride is persuaded. She and her mother-in-law repair one fine morning to the Mondragone quarters. The Marquis arrives, engages the old lady in conversation, while his wife and Bianca slip out of the room—"to look at some frocks which might be of use to you." How vivid it all seems—how the centuries fade away! . . . They go through the house, finally come to a secluded room, where stands "a magnificent bed"—and from that pass into a little cabinet, where, opening a casket, the hostess draws out some rich jewels. "While you are examining these, I'll fetch the keys of my wardrobes." The lady disappears . . . *Enter Francesco!* . . . Bianca trembles from head to foot, turns crimson, falls on her knees before him. "Spare my honour: it is all that is left me."

"Do not fear me, lady!" He disappears, with nobility. Pale and confused, the beauty rises to her feet.

'Tis a pretty scene. But, despite high-flown speeches, blushes, tears, noble vanishings . . . it was not long before that merciless Italian plain-speaking was designating the young lady as *cosa di Francesco*—for "the great ones of the earth" (to quote Litta again) "have many means at their disposal wherewith to attain their ends."

Francesco's negotiations for his marriage with Giovanna, Archduchess of Austria, were going on at the same time as his so different arrangements with the lovely Venetian girl. Great secrecy had, therefore, to be observed. His father, unable to fulminate on the moral side, since he had treated his own first wife in precisely similar fashion, harped urgently on the risks of these nocturnal visits. Francesco's guards were already grumbling over their midnight waitings; Florence was murmurous with satires and pasquinades. Cosmo's letters, however, merely fanned the flame: with a subtle irony, the ardent lover, "to avoid these risks," established the lady, soon after the year 1564, on the Via Maggiore.

His marriage with Giovanna took place in 1565. The



THE ELOPEMENT OF BIANCA CAPELLO

From an Old Print

unhappy Archduchess was kind and courteous, but stiff in manner, of melancholy temperament, and, worst of all, very far from beautiful. Brought up in an Imperial Court, she never could take a Grand-Ducal one seriously, and she clung foolishly to her own people—the Austrians whom she had brought with her, while she treated the Florentines with cold indifference. There was little hope for such a union, even under favourable conditions, and the conditions were as unfavourable as they could be. Long before the marriage, Bianca had obtained complete ascendency over the Grand Duke. "Few," says Galluzzi, "are the examples of such weakness as that of Francesco, and of a lady so cunning and so shameless in taking advantage of it."

Of Bianca's beauty there can be no doubt, though Montaigne and Trollope speak slightingly of it. Montaigne, quoted in Larousse, says that she was handsome according to Italian ideas. "She is stout and of a very full bosom, as the Italian taste desires." Trollope is even less agreeable; but Sanseverino speaks of a portrait which he had seen at Pisa (probably that by one of the Bronzinos), painted when she was thirty. "She was taller than most women, and her bearing was haughty and majestic. Her face and hands and throat were as white as lilies, save for a delicate rose-colour in the cheeks, singularly striking in contrast with the exquisite pallor of the rest. Her hair was fair, curled naturally, and fell in rich locks upon her shoulders. She had a vast rounded forehead (!) and beneath it shone the most brilliant and radiant eyes that painter ever painted. Her slightly pouting lips were crimson."

Bronzino's lovely miniature of her, a copy of which is at the British Museum, represents a most beautiful woman; and Alessandro Allori, his nephew (also called Il Bronzino), painted her, and painted a serene and exquisite face, full of magic, power, and that "remote melancholy" which Larousse assigns her. Fascinating, too, she must have been. In later life, she seems only to have had to put forth her spell, and straightway all fell out as she desired. To gain complete ascendency over such a man as Francesco argues, moreover,

considerable intuition, finesse, and self-control. She had learnt them in a hard school. The cruel step-mother and the scoundrel-husband had left their marks upon her; little as she engages sympathy in later years, we can, perhaps, at this period extend her some forgiveness. So young, so lovely, and so basely used; not ever a model character, wild, wayward, and untrained—to find herself faced with a temptation so enormous, a prize so dazzling to be gained, to realize, as the months went by, her increasing spell for the ruler of her destinies, and, at the same time, the utter worthlessness of her husband—is it impossible to condone Bianca's fault, remembering too the licentious life around her, the venal old mother-in-law, the specious Marchesa with her *bibelots* and her gowns; above all, the strong ambitious spirit dormant in the girl, which had awakened only to know itself so bitterly deceived? She had run away with a Salviati, and had found an obscure, nameless clerk; she had looked for a home in a palace, and had been turned into the drudge of a miserable hovel. A virtue which could have triumphed to the end over such things would never have brought her there at all.

And now, the anger which long had smouldered blazed forth. Ambition henceforth should be her guide. Love had failed her. All her beauty and her magic had been worsted in that field. She would see if they could not conquer elsewhere. She had loved her Pietro—and this was what he had done with her. She did not love her Francesco—we shall see what she did with him.

Her history now becomes less involved, for a time, in contradictory rumours. The straight path of "shameless effrontery" lay before her, and she trod it with no faltering step.

We have seen that before Francesco's marriage, Bianca was established in a palace in the Via Maggiore. Her husband was given the office of Chamberlain, and instantly proceeded to excel in the part of a beggar on horseback. The Medici were already unpopular in Florence. Cosmo had enraged his people with evil living, and licentious treatment of their womenkind. Francesco was now reaping the whirlwind. Detestation, not merely unpopularity, was what *he* had to deal with, and the appointment of Bonaventuri to a high function added nothing to

the prestige of his Court. Bonaventuri, however, soon had rope enough to hang himself by. Among his many intrigues, the chief was with Cassandra Bongianni, a rich widow who had already given her family a deal of very serious trouble. Two of her lovers had been summarily disposed of by her menkind before Pietro appeared. He was repeatedly warned; Francesco, Bianca, both appealed in vain. To the latter he replied—forcibly and unanswerably—"If you say another word, I will cut your throat, and then I can tear off the golden horns with which you have decorated my forehead." Francesco overheard, and, later, remarked grimly to Bianca that "as her husband would take no advice, they must only leave him to his destiny."

A few nights afterwards, Bonaventuri was assassinated as he was returning from a midnight visit to Cassandra. Francesco was away, and did not return till two days later. Then (according to Noble, her unflinching adorer) "the beautiful Bianca, unable to conquer her passion for her husband, so undeserving of her, went to the Grand Duke in all the pomp of mourning," flung herself at his feet, and demanded vengeance upon Pietro's murderers. This was promised; but so half-hearted were the measures taken, that they easily escaped to France.

Thus perished the Prince Charming of the Fairy-Tales—of the Stories of The House Opposite, and The Baker's Boy!

Historians differ wildly as to the date. The most probable by far is 1572; for in that year there is a letter from Bianca speaking of the "recent event" in a context which points to this as being certainly the event referred to, and as being probably very recent. Of Francesco's connivance there is no doubt. In a conversation with his confessor, he admitted it. "I gave neither my advice nor assistance. I merely suffered it to be accomplished."

Bianca was soon proclaimed openly as his mistress. She had made him promise before a sacred image that he would marry her if ever they were both at liberty. Now one obstacle was removed. There remained Giovanna, and there remained also a condition. Francesco's greatest affliction — intensified when he became Grand Duke in 1574—was the fact that he had

no male heir. Giovanna had given him only daughters, and he could not endure the thought of being succeeded by a brother. He even said sometimes that he would be content with a natural son. Bianca knew this. Giovanna was declining in health every day; Pietro was dead; what might not now be gained if that son would but make his appearance? There seemed, alas! little hope of it. She had not had a child since the birth of Pellegrina, ten years before, and already her health was much impaired by two disastrous causes. Intemperance was one; the other was the use of quack nostrums to achieve the very end which they so signally defeated. For this kind of thing, for quacks and witches in all their varied forms of activity, Bianca had a lifelong passion. She would try every dose that she heard of; it was even reported that she used love-philtres upon herself and Francesco to retain his devotion.

Already how marked is the deterioration in the girl! Life can hardly have been worth living, with a frantic anxiety like this gnawing at her heart; dissipation and luxury surrounded her during most of the day and night, but there were the solitary hours which no one can escape, and terrible must have been their effect, to issue in her desperate resolve.

"On the 29th of August, 1576, a male child was born in the palace on the Via Maggiore." Was born . . . not in the palace and not to Bianca, but in one of the poorest slums of the city to a woman of the people, from whose arms he was taken within an hour of his birth. According to Biondelli, the baby was smuggled into the palace in a mandoline! We need not believe this; but what we must believe is that the longed-for male child was not even a natural one. For months Bianca had acted; and when it came to the supreme scene, she acted better than ever. Hours went by in torture—of body (apparently) for her, of mind (actually) for Francesco, who insisted upon remaining through the ordeal! This was inconvenient: the only plan was to wear him out. With the dawn, his fortitude at last broke down; he was induced to leave her room; a pretext was found for dismissing all other superfluous persons—and the trick was done!

The child was called Antonio de' Medici, and the Grand

Duke fervently believed in him—as long as he could, and, if the Irishism be permitted, even longer. For Bianca herself finally confessed to him that the child was not theirs. Probably she did well, for retribution was arriving fast. She had not neglected to have her accomplices removed. They were three—the real mother, another woman, also expectant, to serve as understudy, and Giovanna Santi, her waiting-woman. This last escaped from her too-hasty assassins, who "left her for dead" in a lonely pass of the Apennines. She was not dead, and she managed to get to Bologna, where she made a deposition, and ordered it to be sent to Francesco's brother, Cardinal Ferdinand. He never used it against Bianca during her life-time, but it is not inconceivable that he threatened her with doing so. The brothers were hostile. Francesco was obstinate, and resented interference from his younger brother; if Ferdinand had told him the story, he would certainly have refused it any credence—since even when Bianca confessed, he still persisted in calling Don Antonio his son. Still, she made the avowal—and made it with all her subtlety, dwelling upon the taunts of the brothers at Francesco's lack of male offspring, and the galling circumstance that Ferdinand would succeed to the Grand Dukedom, should no further heir be granted them—a first hint at her deeper design, the legitimation of the reputed son.

So far, so good; but destiny, ever the surpriser, had a big surprise ready. Poor plain Giovanna had sunk into complete insignificance during these triumphant Bianca-years. Life together was intolerable to herself and her husband; she had already made complaint—she had even written to Cosmo. He, as has been hinted, could not take a high moral standpoint; the only view he could understand was that of the henpecked husband of a jealous wife. His letter in reply to her is a model in this sort. He advised her "not to get grasshoppers in her head,"* added that she had many proofs of her husband's love, and wound up by advising "a suitable behaviour." Whatever that may have been—and opinions on suitable behaviour in such circumstances differ widely—Giovanna was at last to have her day.

* *Ghiribizzi in testa.*

In May of the following year—1577—she found herself the mother of a son. Francesco was overjoyed, he showered marks of gratitude upon her; the birth was announced to all the European Courts, and the King of Spain stood sponsor for the child, who was called Filippo, in recognition of this honour. The christening was magnificent. Florence was *en fête*, for Giovanna was the only popular person at Court; her misfortunes and the dignity with which she bore them had softened the Florentine hearts—moreover, Francesco and Bianca were so detested that it was agreeable to have somebody to like.

Now came the hour of Bianca's humiliation. She grew more unpopular than ever, and at last it was found advisable for her to leave Florence. Bitter it must have been to the arrogant woman; for, though Francesco visited her secretly more than ever, we may be sure that that did not content her. One guesses that it was perhaps no less of a relief than a joy to the Grand Duke when in the following year she came back to Florence! This return marked the end of Giovanna's little day. Already Bianca had become reconciled with her family. In 1576, her father had paid her a visit, and had been loaded with presents by Francesco; and now in this year 1578, there arrived in Florence her brother Vittorio. He was received like the ambassador of a great power; fêted and caressed, he rode in triumph through the city. . . . Giovanna realized the truth. All this time, she had but been the more bitterly deceived. She was again about to give birth to a child. In the distress of her discovery, all went wrong; she died under the surgeon's hands on April 10, 1578. The usual word ran about—the word that came so easily to men's lips because the thing came so easily to their hands: *Poison!* Siebenkees rejects this theory. "No poison was wanting to accelerate the death of that Princess," he gravely says. The Grand Duke behaved atrociously at her funeral. He showed no grief whatever; and when the procession was passing the house whence Bianca was watching it, he glanced up at the window, raised eagerly his mourning-cap, and bowed low to her. Directly the ceremony was over, he went to a party at her house.

But troubles were growing round him. The House of

Austria was alienated; Venice was still irreconcilable; Florence was in a turmoil of hate and suspicion. His advisers urged a separation from Bianca, and at last he resolved to put his conscience into the hands of his confessor. After a heart-searching talk, he actually made up his mind to go. He was to leave Florence and travel for a while, said the "best friends"—who then of course proceeded to urge a willing horse too far. They had got him away, but they could not make haste slowly: they began to talk about a "suitable marriage." It was the stupidest thing they could have done. For Bianca had not been idle. With her extraordinary subtlety, she had made all preparations for a broken-hearted departure from Francesco's dominions—preparations of which we may be sure her lover was informed. She took care that they were lengthy—they lasted, in fact, until Francesco was safely back. Then came a dramatic pause. Nothing apparently was being done. Bianca's agents were busy as bees, but she preserved a masterly inactivity. . . . Of course she won! She was "permitted" to pay a visit to the Grand Duke, and from that instant her enemies were scattered.

At the end of May, Fortune dealt to her the woman's surest winning card. Francesco fell ill. She nursed him tenderly, and "he loved her more than ever." Siebenkees has here a quaint little story to tell. On June 5, Bianca entered Francesco's room to beg him to eat something. He said he was not hungry.

"Well," replied she, "accept at least this egg from me. Eat it. It will do you good."

He ate the egg and said, instantly, "I feel a great deal better; and I thank you for your present." Never, indeed, had the costliest gift a more complete success. "Here, take my hand," cried Francesco, sitting up in bed. "You are my wife." And they were married secretly that very day! . . .

The marriage was kept profoundly secret during the mourning, for it was barely two months since Giovanna's death. Ferdinand heard of it, but he took it quietly. He felt sure that Bianca would never be made Grand Duchess, though Francesco might avow her as his wife—and no doubt by this time the exasperated family were grateful for small mercies.

It was not until far into 1579 that the secret was made public property. Francesco's first step was to write to the Doge of Venice, and beg him to get the Senate to confer upon Bianca the title of Daughter of the Republic. (This was a distinction invented by that haughty city; any lady who obtained it took precedence over all other Italian Princesses.) His letter says with amusing ambiguity that Bianca's "personal conduct has long since been known to him, and in every respect answers his anticipations!" . . . All went well. On July 17, 1579, Bianca Capello was created a Daughter of the Republic, and the Republic ensured her being elevated as well to the rank of Grand Duchess—not merely recognized as the Prince's wife. It was now that, in recognition of the new status of the lady, the "Ten" had that compromising entry in the Archives erased.

The country was suffering acute distress, and the people were furious at the outrageous expenditure upon their detested Bianca. Florence was frantic; there were pasquinades, whisperings of the enmity of Austria, the scorn of other lands. . . . "*Qu'importe!*" exclaims Larousse, with irony. "*Blanche était enfin Grande-Duchesse de Toscane!*"

She was; and she quickly took her place in the family-councils. Her story for some years now is that of the mediator. She played the engaging and exacting part with conspicuous brilliancy; but her chief aim was the winning of the Florentine hearts. For she was abhorred, and she knew it. Her cruelty and callousness were taken for granted: there was a tale of a half-crazy old woman, luckless enough to offend her, having been flogged so violently that she died within three days. And then she protected spies, she was surrounded by a rabble of quacks and mysterymongers, she drank too much. . . . The Florentines, in short, could not endure her. Irreconcilable they had been, and irreconcilable they remained.

In 1586, Bianca was again expectant of a child, or reported to be so. Perhaps she genuinely was—but we cannot wonder that Ferdinand was suspicious! Francesco was not; on the contrary, he was all excitement, and as sanguine as on the first

occasion. One night, horses actually stood saddled in the courtyard of the Villa, to carry the joyful news to every quarter; but all was vain. Either she had been mistaken, or else the means, if not the courage, had failed her to attempt the old trick of the Baby in the Mandoline. It was serious, for Francesco had now no legitimate heir. Giovanna's son had died in 1582. In 1583, the supposititious child had been legitimated. This was a preliminary to giving him the succession to the Grand Duchy. Still, if Bianca could achieve a true-born son, how much the better! That was why hopes and fears were running so high in the year of this final disappointment.

And then, once more, the old hostility broke out between the Grand Duke and the Cardinal. Bianca tried her hand at mediation, used her finest art, and apparently succeeded. The brothers were reconciled by letter in 1587, and the Cardinal promised to pay, in the autumn, a visit to the "hunting-box" at Poggio a Cajano.

He arrived in the beginning of October, and was instantly plunged into a vortex of festivities—the culmination of which was to be a grand banquet. The evening came. "It was the 10th of October, 1587. Already it was growing very late, but the party was still at table. The guests, wearied by hunting, dancing, by all the pleasures and surprises with which the bewildering day had been crowded, were awaiting impatiently the Grand Duke's signal to rise. Bianca alone sat wide-eyed and radiant. She had promised herself to gain the heart of her enemy, and she had put forth all her powers, all the magic of her subtle feminine nature; she had been lovely, kind, witty, irresistible! That was why her eyes were sparkling, why she sat there radiant and compelling, while all the rest were dim-eyed and fatigued . . . she thought that, like the Egyptian Queen of old, she had made a slave of him who was against her. All at once, while still she smiles and talks, she feels herself attacked by agonizing internal pains—her mouth foams, her arms writhe, she looks appalled and appalling, she calls, she cries—she appeals to Francesco, he tries to go to her aid; but suddenly he himself is seized by the same terrible anguish—and

some hours later, both she and he breathe their last." That is the story as told by Larousse—by far the most dramatic version; and the more so, because he does not attenuate by any attempt at explanation. The reader supplies himself with the word of the enigma, as the populace did then—and not only the populace, but the most sober historians. Litta has one of his attractive *obiter dicta* upon it: "Far be it from me to deny or affirm the truth of all this; but I cannot hide from myself the fact that, in the Family of the Medici, there was never anything very extraordinary in the sudden death of several persons at the same time."

Poison, of course. But poison by whom, for whom? Poison how and poison where? Let us see. To our hand comes another fairy tale: The Story of the Poisoned Tart!

"Bianca put poison into a sort of tart, of which she had observed the Cardinal particularly fond. Ferdinand either suspected or had secretly discovered her design. He declined tasting the tart. The more she pressed, the more he excused himself. Francesco, hearing the tart so much commended, ate of it plentifully. Bianca, seeing her plot take a wrong turn . . . ate up the remainder." *

That is one story—and an extremely lame one. Bianca was no blunderer. Would she have blundered so ridiculously as this? To poison food and let her husband instead of the intended victim gorge on it—finally, panic-stricken, to gorge on it herself! Crafty, resourceful, daring, she had been throughout her whole career, and now she was to lose her head, turn coward! This is not Bianca. . . . But to work by the surer method, that of motive, what had she to gain? True, Ferdinand was her enemy, he knew of her trick with the base-born child; but neither seems sufficient reason for running such tremendous risk. He was not even Francesco's only brother; Pietro, as hostile and far more violent, was ready to take up the part of foe. There is no evidence against Bianca: the thing was too

* Ferdinand was said to wear always on his finger a ring set with a stone which turned colour when near to any sort of poison. "These rings," remarks one writer, drily, "are like the Phœnix, which is said to exist, but which no one has ever seen."

clumsily done to be her work, and there was not sufficient motive for her doing it.

But there is another version of the story—and this one attributes the deed to Ferdinand. He had noticed that Francesco was addicted to the dish, and he bribed the cook to poison it. Plausibility, at any rate, this does possess; and it is almost confirmed by Ferdinand's conduct when the pair had eaten and succumbed. They were taken to a gloomy room near the banqueting-hall, laid on couches—and left entirely alone. The door was locked, no physician was summoned: it was indeed forbidden to summon one. A post-mortem examination was insisted on by the Cardinal, and carried out in the presence of Bianca's daughter, Pellegrina, and her husband; but this, as Trollope points out, is rather a damning than a helpful point, "for the medical science of the time was wholly incompetent to conduct a *post-mortem* . . . and Pellegrina and her husband would have been none the wiser, in any case, for seeing the body opened."

Motive here is immensely powerful. Bianca had been a thorn in Ferdinand's side for years. His family's prestige was diminishing, not only on her account, but also on that of Francesco's eccentricities and blunders. The passion of Ferdinand's life was the Family. Could he contemplate calmly the almost certain elevation of the base-born boy to the reigning place in it, when he knew himself to be the rightful heir? . . . If such problems be judged by motive, and if there were poison in the tart, it was Ferdinand who put it there.

But the truth is that nobody knows whether there was or not—not even Cigogna! The official report was that the Grand Duke died on October 19 of a tertian fever, brought on by fatigue, and rendered fatal by his refusal to submit to proper medical treatment; and that Bianca died on the following morning of a similar complaint, complicated by the mischief she had long since done to her system.

Ferdinand's behaviour to the dead woman was atrocious. He was asked at Florence whether Bianca's body should be publicly exposed beside that of Francesco, bearing the crown to which she was entitled. He answered: "She has worn the

crown long enough. . . . Proceed with respect to her funeral as you please, but we will not have her among our dead." Her body was therefore deposited in the great common vault of the Church of San Lorenzo—"with two yellow wax torches beside it." * Her escutcheon was taken down from the public buildings, and that of Giovanna substituted; all pictures and medals of her were suppressed in Florence; and Ferdinand gave her publicly the epithet of *The Detestable Bianca* (*La Pessima Bianca*).

So it ends—the confused and enigmatic story! "*E non fu pianto*," says Litta of Francesco. "He was not lamented": grimmest of all epitaphs, yet too kindly for *La Pessima Bianca*. Florence openly exulted in her death—epigrams and satires whizzed about the city, nothing was too bad to say, and the pasquinaders were encouraged in the highest quarters. . . . It could not have been otherwise. Looking back from our long view-point, we perceive no ray of moral sunlight in the later character of this beautiful, able woman. Others, as unlovable, have left as stained a page—but few so sordid a one. Nearly always there has been some motive, some impulse, not entirely ignoble; a creed, a policy, a personal passion, has softened our judgment, let the light in, as it were. The ugliness here is that of moral squalor. We do not feel, as we read, that the story is one of a Prince and a great Courtesan. We feel that it is a story of two people, highly placed, who had no personal or moral dignity. The word "vulgarity" hovers on our lips. . . .

* Yellow wax torches were the cheapest and worst. Sanseverino declares that her body was exposed "*nue et échevelée*," but this, one fancies, may be very strongly doubted.

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

1571–1599

THIS is one of those love-stories—always the most attractive to posterity—where the personal magnetism of the man concerned is all, or nearly all. Of Gabrielle d'Estrées the supreme distinction is that Henry of Navarre adored her. She was gay and sweet and lovely—serene, *insouciante*; "light as a bird in its winged roundness, lively as a lark, she exhilarated, distracted, consoled—and she never needed consolation."

Clever in that, at any rate—for the Vagabond King would not have been good at the task: he too often needed consolation himself! Melancholy was a foe which he loved to escape from when he came to his *chères amours*; and if it had to intrude upon the visit, he preferred bringing it with him to finding it established for his arrival. Thus Gabrielle d'Estrées, with her sunny, careless nature, might have been made for him. She did not exact, she "disdained to dominate"—it was such hard work! Now and then, she would feel the prick of personal ambition—for her lover she felt it always, and finely—but to plot and plan for herself was too tedious; she could not keep it up. The secret of life was to enjoy life. She instinctively thus rejected that customary attitude of the Royal mistress—which indeed continually strikes one as the most discomfortable in the world—of a watchful, avid, ever-encroaching domination, a secret waiting for some tardy triumph, a tireless averting of unformulated dangers. . . . That was not for Gabrielle; and it was through her very slackness, her delicious, easy *laissez-aller*, that with this lover she was bound to prevail.

Henry was of all men the one who could least be driven.

Being driven implies a certain amount of dulness in companionship; of argumentations, tiffs, *maussaderies*. The Gascon winced from all that as a wild pony winces from harness, and his jump aside would have taken so wide a range that a cross mistress would, in an hour, have found him for ever out of reach of the collar.*

They were absolutely suited to one another—that is the secret really. Gabrielle needed only to be herself; Henry would have been himself in any case. No one ever did make any real change in him. Whether she saw that or not is conjectural. Probably not. She simply did what pleased her best, and it pleased her best to please: she was one of those most fortunate —and most desirable—women.

They met first in 1590, or the beginning of 1591, when Gabrielle was between nineteen and twenty, and Henry thirty-seven, for he was born on December 13, 1553.

Romance and moral squalor contend sadly in the story of their coming together. The girl's early surroundings were deplorable. Her mother, Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière, was a type of the disreputable great lady. She came of a race of *femmes galantes;* and poor honest Antoine d'Estrées had been fool enough to marry her. She ran away from him in the end with the Marquis d'Alègre, Governor of Issoire;† but he had many years of her companionship before that, for they had eight children—six girls and two boys, and Gabrielle, the third daughter, was twenty-one and had left home for Court, before a mother's tender care was withdrawn from the Château de Cœuvres, the d'Estrées' ancestral castle near the Eure, between Soissons and Laon.

* This is clearly shown by the tone of his love-letters to the much less adaptable Henriette d'Entragues, who succeeded Gabrielle in his versatile affections—

"You must give up these tempers, if you wish to keep my love, for as King and as Gascon I cannot tolerate them. Besides, men who love devotedly, as I do, like to be flattered and not abused."

† They were both killed by an enraged and scandalized populace in a rising at Issoire in 1593.

Madame's care for her daughters consisted in finding them lovers, and those the most profitable to the family that could be procured. In Bassompierre's very scandalous *Mémoires-Journaux*—a book of doubtful authenticity, yet not wholly despised by Sainte-Beuve—we are told that the six d'Estrées girls and their brother * were known as the Seven Deadly Sins ; and that Gabrielle, at sixteen, was offered by her mother through the Duc d'Épernon (one of the famous *Mignons*), to Henri III., the last Valois King, and Henry of Navarre's predecessor on the French throne. "He quickly tired of her." . . . She then passed through several hands (if Bassompierre be believed), until the Duc de Bellegarde, Grand Écuyer of France, appeared triumphantly upon the scene of her love-affairs.

Roger de Saint-Lary, Duc de Bellegarde, was one of the most attractive men of his time. No woman had ever been known to resist him. When he came to Cœuvres, on the report of a friend of the d'Estrées family, to see *la belle Gabrielle*, he left behind him at Mantes a devoted and lovely lady, who had nursed him through a serious illness—Madame d'Humières, destined to be robbed more than once of her lovers by the too-ravishing Mademoiselle d'Estrées. . . . Bellegarde came to Cœuvres, and "was shut up for two days with Madame Gabrielle." This was evidently a new experience in facility, even for him, since on his return to Mantes he was so uplifted that he told Henry all about it. He was well punished, in the end, for his boasting. Inextinguishable curiosity was a mark of Henry's *galanterie* ; the next time Bellegarde wanted to visit Cœuvres, his sovereign insisted on going with him.

Henry saw the vaunted lady, and was profoundly impressed. But he could not stay ; "glory called him elsewhere"—with warring sighs and groans he left her. He did not forget, though ; and soon she was fetched to Mantes. She made a fresh conquest directly she got there. This was Henri d'Orléans, Duc de Longueville. Alas ! it was he who had replaced Bellegarde, during his absence at Cœuvres, with Madame d'Humières. . . . "Longueville always loved the nearest fair," says the author of *Les Amours du Grand Alcantre*. Bellegarde

* One son died young.

oscillated between the two. . . . It is a sordid story; and the one man who could cut the ugly knot was nearly always away from Court. Henry, in a word, was busy and absent. The lady was there by his arrangement, yet it was others who wooed her, enjoyed her favours. . . . Intolerable! He came back, and played the sovereign as well as the lover. "No one shall share you with me." That was a bomb-shell. The lovers were disconcerted; the lady was furious. She said she would not be anybody's slave, violence was not the way to make a woman love you, and so forth—and she acted on her words, for she went straight home, without saying good-bye to the unhappy tyrant. He was thunderstruck. The only thing to do was to follow her. But it was dangerous for him to travel alone in that disaffected country; there were seven leagues to go; and how could he take an escort on such an errand? He thought it over, then decided quickly, as his manner was. Nothing more hateful to Henry than the *against*; he cared only to see the *for*—one thing was enough at a time! He went; and he took his escort with him, but dismissed it when they got within three leagues of the Castle. Directly he was alone, he dismounted, put on a peasant's dress, took a sackful of straw on his shoulders, and in this preposterous fashion reached the gates of Cœuvres. Gabrielle was in a gallery with her sister, Madame de Villars; she saw the uncouth figure, recognized it as the King of Navarre—and was desperately annoyed, as any woman must have been. She told him so distinctly. "You are so hideous that I can't bear to look at you," was her winding-up. Poor Henry! He stood, clasping his sack, rueful, appealing, pitiable now, because so utterly crestfallen; but the irritated girl was ruthless. Perhaps she was all the angrier because she *had* fallen a little in love with him, and now there he was, looking so ridiculous . . . and so ugly. She turned away in disgust. "Go and change your clothes." He obediently and no doubt gladly did so, but she did not await his return. She disappeared, shut herself up in her room (where she probably shed some indignant tears), and left the entertainment of him to her sister. He went back to Mantes next day—sad, but not despairing. Madame de Villars was subtle, we

GABRIELLE D'ESTREES

From an Old Print

may guess, and had given him a few psychological, consoling hints.

His next attempt was much more kingly. He made Antoine d'Estrées Governor of the Île-de-France and member of the Royal Council. This brought the d'Estrées family to the Court, which was still at Mantes. There the old complications threatened to begin again, but Gabrielle's heart was touched genuinely at last, and she was content to be tolerably faithful to her impetuous, foolish Henry. Bellegarde did not easily accept the change; but de Longueville, "thinking of his future," asked her to return his love-letters, promising to return hers at the same time. She was quite amused—she sent them back at once in a bundle, but he kept the tenderest ones of hers. She never forgave him that. She resolved to revenge herself, and how easily she could! De Longueville had not thought deeply enough about his future. He soon found himself obliged to leave Court; he joined the disloyal party, and was killed by a shot in the head at the entrance to the town of Durlens in 1595. "*Ainsi finit le duc de Longueville pour avoir été trop fin.*"

Henry had got his way, as he had the trick of doing; and now that the love-affair is a settled thing, it is time to regard the lovers with the eyes of a personal curiosity. What did they look like? Her description sounds like that of the heroine in some romantic, over-charged novel—golden hair, big blue eyes, pink-and-white complexion, rosebud mouth, pearly teeth. . . .

"All the face composed of flowers, we say!"

"*Elle était blanche et blonde,*" murmurs Sainte-Beuve, musically: astonishingly fair she truly is in the Sainte-Geneviève portrait—only the faintest rose-colour in the round fresh cheeks. Her big blue eyes had a vague look in them, "a kind of sweet indecision which charmed, but did not reassure," says Michelet, who always takes back with one hand what he gives Gabrielle with the other! She was very slender when Henry first saw her, but she grew matronly with time. Lescure supplies the last little stroke. "Her pretty double-chin—*one of the seven beauties*": how Gallic that is, with its air of the expert in feminine charms!

And he? The winning face confronts us vividly in the Porbus group of pictures, and we feel that we know the very sound of the voice, clasp of the hand, of him who was so much more always of the Man than of the King. The lovable, delightful man! writer of some of the most exquisite love-letters that were ever penned; Gascon, soldier, good fellow; crammed with faults, fickle, forgetful, mocking, mobile; loving to laugh, to love, to live; untidy, never able to be pompous, too well able to be easy; utterly spontaneous, yet so supple that he seemed often to be crafty—promising, breaking; loving, forgetting; laughing, weeping; instinct with the gaiety of the charmer of men who knows his power well, "the man of short stories, long meals, warm kisses" . . . was there ever a more human, a more vital, creature on God's earth than Henry of Navarre! He would consult his Ministers upon some knotty problem—such as his own marriage with Gabrielle!—walking up and down a garden or gallery, with his fingers entwined in theirs, "which was his custom." Sometimes they would preserve an attitude of aloofness, and then the King would turn nervous, and leave the matter untouched except by hints, "which they did not affect to understand."* He seemed, in short, unable to be anything but lovable when he was with a fellow-creature, and when he wrote to a fellow-creature—no matter about what—he was more lovable still.

Tall, with a well-developed figure and the Gascon face—nose impossibly long, brow high, eyes large, sparkling, well-opened ("incomparable instruments of sensibility," remarks Michelet); his mouth at once tender and mocking, his bright black hair not too carefully kept, his beard long, and beginning to turn grey: such he was to see when Gabrielle saw him first. Poor he was then, surrounded by motley troops, living from hand-to-mouth, King only of Navarre, and even that a mere title of honour, for Spain occupied the kingdom until 1594. In

* His conversation with Sully in the garden at Rennes (1598) was one like this: no more delicious bit of historical comedy exists. It may be read in Sully's wonderful Memoirs, or in most of the longer books dealing with Gabrielle d'Estrées; Sainte-Beuve has an excellent summary in his *Causeries du Lundi: Gabrielle d Estrées* (August 8, 1852).

KING HENRY IV

From an Old Print

that year many of his horses had to be sold because there was no money to buy fodder. He had a dozen shirts, and some of them were torn ; eight handkerchiefs he had proudly counted on, but his valet had to confess that there were only five now. Some Flemish linen had, however, been ordered, and more would soon be ready. "That's a good thing," said His Majesty, cheerily. . . .

Gabrielle must have genuinely loved him. She was with him through all this desperate struggle ; her tenderness and her tact were unfailing. A contemporary historian has shown us where her power lay. "He confided to her all his affairs, he showed her all the troubles of his mind, and she soothed his pain, she never rested until the cause of it was removed, until any offence was smoothed over . . . so that those at Court confessed that this great favour, dangerous in that imperious sex, helped many and oppressed none—and many rejoiced in her good fortune."

Antoine d'Estrées, soon after his establishment at Court, began to make himself troublesome. Knowing of what the women of his wife's family were capable, he threatened to remove her daughter from Henry's attentions. There was only one means of emancipating Gabrielle from his authority—to get her married. She was unwilling. The candidate was Nicolas d'Amerval, *sieur* de Liancourt, a very ugly widower with fourteen children, rich, and of distinguished family. But the King promised that Liancourt should be her husband only in name ; he himself would come on the wedding-day and take her away—so she allowed herself at last to be persuaded. Absent, busy, forgetful —which was it ? At any rate, Henry did not come. . . . The pair were then summoned to Court. Henry was just leaving for Chartres, and Madame de Liancourt went with him. The husband "philosophically retired," and it was not very long before the marriage was declared null and void.*

The anecdotists and scribbling poets were busy, of course.

* Liancourt accepted damages. Lescure delightfully comments : "*Le mot n'est pas du temps ; mais la chose est de tous les temps !*"

Obscene little rhymes were flying about Liancourt's adventure; the antechambers were murmurous with malicious *histoires galantes* about the irresistible Bellegarde. Of him, Henry was openly jealous: his letters to Gabrielle are full of it—

"You know the resolution I have made—not to complain any more. And now I'll make another: not to be cross any more."

He was not always so docile, though. "If I had known of *my competitor* (the Duc de Bellegarde) what I learnt after being at Saint-Denis, on that journey you know of, I should not have seen you again—I should have broken with you there and then." And again: "There must be no more of this saying: '*I will, really.*' You must say: '*I have done it.*'" . . .

But even over that he had to joke at times. He loved to mock at his rivals. He would call Bellegarde "Dead-Leaf" on account of his sallow complexion; and the story-makers had one tale so comically characteristic that, true or not, it deserves telling.

"The King once came so suddenly into Madame de Liancourt's room that M. de Bellegarde, who was already there, could not hide so alertly under the bed but that the King caught sight of him." Nothing, however, was said, and the Royal collation was served as usual. Henry, with a malicious glance at Gabrielle, suddenly threw a partridge under the bed. She was disconcerted beyond measure, but he laughed, saying, "*Il faut que tout le monde vive!*"

At any rate, Bellegarde was the only rival; and finally he was banished from Court, and ordered not to reappear there unmarried. He could not keep away from the headquarters of gaiety, so he "very quickly" married a Mademoiselle de Beuil, and settled down as a model husband.

Henry's jealousy dissipated, there was no cloud in the blue sky, nor any in the blue eyes of the sunny, fickle lady. Let us read some of the enchanting love-letters he wrote her—those "little masterpieces of winged grace," with their refrain, "*Je vous baise un million de fois*," and the names of love so cunningly varied: *Mes chères amours, Mon Menon, Mon tout*; Dear Heart, True Heart, *mon vrai cœur*. . . .

"My Beautiful Love,—Two hours after the arrival of this messenger, you will see a cavalier who loves you very much; they call him the King of France and of Navarre, an honourable title certainly, but very troublesome—that of your subject is much more delightful; the three together are good with any sauce, and I am resolved to give them up to no one. (This 12th September, *from our delicious deserts of Fontainebleau.*)"

"My True Heart, . . . You declare that you love me a thousand times more than I love you. You have lied, and you shall maintain your lie with the arms which you have chosen . . . I shall not see you for ten days—it is enough to kill me. I will not tell you how much I mind: it would make you too vain."

Here is a little bird-note for the Spring: "*March 1st.* The fields are much sweeter than the town. Good-morning, my all!" And again: "This letter is short, so that you may go to sleep again after reading it. Good-night for me—good-morning for you, my dear, dear mistress."

"My Darling Love,—You have much more reason to be afraid of my loving you too much than too little. That fault pleases you—and me too, since you like it. See how I yield to your every wish! Don't I deserve to be loved? And I think you love me, and so, with a happy heart, I finish."

These radiant things, like the singing-birds of Badroulbadour, followed their Princess wherever she went.

In 1594, Henry entered Paris after the long siege, "on a dapple-grey horse, wearing a grey velvet habit stiff with gold, a grey hat with the White Plume of Navarre, and his face all laughter, delighted to see the crowds cheering so wildly: *Vive le roi!* He had his hat for ever in his hand, principally to salute the ladies who filled every window. . . . He specially saluted three very pretty ones in mourning. . . . Madame de Liancourt went a little before him, in a magnificent open litter, so loaded with pearls and precious stones that she dimmed the light of the

torches ; and she had on a dress of black satin, all tufted with white." *

Maîtresse-en-titre. It was official now, and soon afterwards she was made Marquise de Monceaux. Her son, César, was given the title of Monsieur, hitherto reserved only for the true *enfants de France.* She began then to understand personal ambition—womanly as ever, it was with her child that that first came to her. Henry adored little César. He would take him to the Fair at Saint-Germain, trot him round the booths, buy him silver sweetmeat-boxes, or consult profoundly with the tiny fellow over the buying of a ring for his mother. Sainte-Beuve has noted this trait in Henry, so apparently incongruous with his extreme volatility ; "but he was inconstant only at the promptings of the senses and of occasion. He had in him much of the 'good husband,' of the *père de famille,* who loves his own fireside. He needed fidelity, and the *habitude de logis* ; he delighted in playing with children." . . . And Gabrielle, with her sweet facility, "never scolding nor nagging," was the right woman for him to marry. As a private person, it would have been the best thing he could do. And as a dynastic question, we may well ask ourselves if the Vendômes could have been more harmful to France than the Bourbons eventually were!

In 1595, the boy was legitimated.

It was the thin edge of the wedge : from that time the idea of marrying her got firm hold of him. He took her to Rouen for the Assembly of Notables in 1596 ; and she was present, though hidden behind an arras, when he made that famous harangue where he offered to "put himself as a pupil in their hands," with its passionate, moving peroration. . . . He asked her how she liked it. She answered that "she never heard any one speak so well, but she was amazed to hear him talk of being a pupil." "*Ventre-saint-gris!*" cried Henry, who never missed an opportunity for his favourite oath, "it is true ; but I mean it with my sword at my side!"

With her increasing power, though, there came unpopularity, especially in Paris, where all had not been well since the triumphant entry. Famine and sickness devastated the city ; the

* *Journal de l'Estoille.*

sky was leaden, rain poured incessantly, and the mob, turned superstitious, called it all the Punishment of Heaven, for entertaining a heretic and excommunicant. Yet through the gloom the gay, extravagant Court-life went on, and haggard eyes watched enviously from furtive corners.

"On Friday, March 17, 1595, there was a great thunderstorm at Paris . . . during which the King was hunting in the environs with his Gabrielle, newly made Marquise de Monceaux. Side by side with the King she was, and he was holding her hand. She was riding astride, dressed all in green ;* and she came back with him to Paris, like that." † Unpopularity is plainly written between those lines, and l'Estoille stood for the man in the street: what he wrote, that personage was safe to be thinking.

This kind of odium, however, is the common lot of favourites. Gabrielle now unfortunately made for herself a private foe.

Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully, Marquis de Rosny, was Henry's favourite Minister, and it has been asserted by some that he owed his high position to Gabrielle's early influence.‡ But she alienated him by obtaining for her father—"flagrantly incapable"—the Grand Mastership of Artillery, a post which Sully (then known as Rosny) ardently desired. Moreover, he was the type of man who takes a perverted pride of honour in biting the hand which has fed him. To be known as *l'homme de Gabrielle* would have been wormwood to Sully, who piqued himself on being nobody's creature, not even the King's. Economical, orderly, indefatigable, he had all the discomfortable virtues; his idea of his own importance was overweening ; but of his whole-souled devotion to Henry there can be no doubt. They were bound to one another in a quite peculiar affection—Henry was the very core of Sully's heart. The King soon found himself between the devil and the deep sea. "An insupportable creature, that Rosny! With his sour face and his eternal talk of 'the public good'! He would sacrifice you to the State, and make you die of dulness for the

* Her favourite colour, as grey was Henry's.

† *Journal de l'Estoille.*

‡ It was more to injure her open enemy, Sancy, than to oblige Rosny that she had used her power with the King.

sake of future glory." Poor Henry had sometimes, truly, found the Sully-virtues a trial. "Scripture doesn't say we're to have *no* faults," he had written once, with his inimitable spontaneity; "and I've done my best to control myself. You know with what passion I have loved my mistresses—yet I've often supported your opinions against theirs." It was true. Henry could be the master when he chose; the lover did not blind the King. Even Gabrielle was, in 1598, to suffer a cruel momentary defeat at the hands of the detested Rosny.

He refused to pass the accounts for the baptism of her second son, Alexandre, which had been performed as that of an *enfant de France.* It was pointed out to him that the fees were those usual at such a ceremony. He rose in righteous wrath. "*Allez, allez! Je n'y ferai rien: sachez qu'il n'y a point d'enfant de France!*" And with that he went off to the King. The King upheld him. "Tell Madame la Duchesse,* and put her in good humour if you can. If you can't, then I will speak as master, and not as servant." Sully failed signally to put her in good humour, and returned to Henry. They then drove together to Gabrielle's abode. When the King saw her, "he did not embrace her, or speak a tender word," but led her into her bedroom, followed by Sully, and began! "*Vois, Madame, hé! Vrai Dieu, qu'est-ce que ceci?* . . . I have loved you because I have found you gentle and gracious, sweet-tempered, yielding—now I begin to doubt the reality of all this, and to fear that you will be like other women as soon as I have raised you to the rank you desire."

It was too much! She burst into tears, called on death. "If I had a dagger here, I'd plunge it in my heart. You would find your image there. . . . If you were wounding me like this for the sake of another woman, I could at least understand it, but to sacrifice me to an insolent valet!" She threw herself on her bed. Henry was overwhelmed for a moment—"I saw his heart stagger," says Sully, picturesquely—but he recovered himself, and uttered the famous phrase, "I could better do without ten mistresses like you, than one Minister like him!" He turned to go after that: no doubt it had pierced his own heart.

* She had by this time been created Duchesse de Beaufort.

She rushed after him, threw herself at his feet, pleaded, said her own tender, yielding things. . . . It ended in a reconciliation all round; but though she won in the end—for he almost openly proclaimed her as Queen in the months following—the wound was mortal. It was the first unkind thing that he had ever said to her—and he had said it before Sully. It happened on December 13, 1598—his birthday! * She was *enceinte* at the time.

They were still awaiting the final steps for his divorce from Marguerite de Valois in 1599. He had determined to marry Gabrielle. Her wedding-garments were ready—they were of the Royal crimson; Henry had given her the nuptial ring with which, at his coronation, he had wedded France; she was Queen in everything except the name. Truly it seemed that Sully was defeated now. . . . She was at Fontainebleau with the King in April, but Easter was near, and it was thought well for them to separate for the last days of Holy Week. Henry begged her to return to Paris. She wept when she received the order; she was very superstitious, and her astrologers had been prophesying nothing but evil. For long she had been depressed: "*elle était fort troublée de sa grossesse*," "she used to cry all night"—and now came this separation. She wanted so much to be with him! He was profoundly himself dejected: they both had had menacing dreams—but the confessor insisted that she must go, and she was docile as ever. The King went half-way to Paris with her. It was only for a few days, yet their very souls were weighed down with fear. Every word they uttered seemed to have a fatal meaning. They said good-bye—then rushed into one another's arms again. . . . The last words he spoke were to recommend her to the special care of his special friend, La Varenne.

She reached Paris on Tuesday, April 6, about three o'clock; supped at Zamet's (a rich and artistic Italian financier, who was a close friend of Henry's), and, the same evening, went to the Deanery of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, where her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, lived. (That lady was then at Chartres.) On Wednesday, she went to hear *Tenebræ* at Saint-Antoine.

* And Sully's!

There she was suddenly taken ill; she left immediately, stopped at Zamet's, "where she ate a lemon," and then went back to the Deanery, and to bed. The night passed better than she had feared; and on Thursday she was able to hear Mass at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. When she returned, she again fell ill, and at four o'clock, the most appalling pains and convulsions seized her. She was treated with the pitiless methods of the time; on Friday an operation was performed, and her infant was found to be dead. She was then bled three times. The convulsions returned. She died in agonies unspeakable, unthinkable, on Saturday, April 10, 1599, at five o'clock in the morning—twenty-eight years old.

"Innocent or not—*une mort maudite*": that is what one chronicler calls it. Poison was, of course, suspected; and only of late years has it been sought to prove, by means of a hitherto unpublished letter,* written six days after the event, that her death was natural. Zamet was suspected; Ferdinand de' Medici (uncle of the Princess whom Henry eventually married) was suspected; Sully was suspected. There is no safe evidence on either side. But, however it may be, if the death *were* natural, Nature sometimes has the air of committing a crime; and she has that air when we think of, when we are forced to read, the frightful story—mitigated here—of the last hours of Gabrielle d'Estrées. Let it be said in a word. She was so tortured that Henry was not allowed to see her before or after death. He was told by his friend, La Varenne, that she was dead, some hours before she actually breathed her last. Only those who have no sympathetic imagination for others can blame the officious friend.

"The King fell, as if struck by a thunderbolt, when he heard the news." As soon as he recovered, he said vehemently that at any rate he must see her, and hold her in his arms once more. But they did not let him go—he must not see her, alive or dead.

He wore black for eight days, and violet for "three whole months." He wrote to his sister, Madame de Bar, who had been Gabrielle's friend, "The root of my love is dead; there will be no spring for me any more." . . .

* Jules Loiseleur. *Questions historiques du XVII^e^ siècle.* 1873.

On October 6 of the same year, he was writing his first love-letter to Gabrielle's successor, Henriette d'Entragues, with whom he had already had some "passages."

It is all of a piece. He had truly loved her, longed to marry her ; but he *could* not remember, he tossed the past aside always —he must go on, go on. . . .

She had loved him as he was.

MARIE MANCINI

1639–1715

FASCINATING, generous-hearted, restless creature, immortalized—how characteristically—by a good-bye!

For she was always leaving somewhere and somebody for otherwhere—and better luck with the next somebody. *La plus folle et toutefois la meilleure de ces Mazarines*: that was the verdict of Saint-Simon on this woman who never found a kindly hand to guide her, and who needed guidance more than most. She was governed in early youth by the uncle she detested; but it was guidance, not government, that she required. She was loved all through her life, but never by a man who could influence her. Here was the type of woman who dominates, and would be happier if she could find her victor. Her heart was too generous for any kind of calculation, yet in the love-affairs of her troubled existence, Marie Mancini exercised over the men who adored her that magic spell which left herself too free.

She was the third of five daughters—of five nieces more aptly, since it was as *les nièces de Mazarin* that these Italian girls were known in half the capitals of Europe. Her father was Michaele-Lorenzo Mancini, Roman Baron; her mother it was who made her a "Mazarine." She was Hiéronyme Mazarini, younger sister of that enigmatic prelate who surely made such use of nieces as never had been made before. He was an uncle to be proud of—and to detest. All the girls heartily detested him. But if he used his lovely kinswomen as the merest pawns in his game, he at any rate changed most of them into

something very like queens. "France," as Gui-Patin remarked, "fed these little Italian fishes"; and it was Mazarin who brought them to France.

France had fed him, too, for that matter! At the time of Marie's arrival there (1653) he was practically ruler of the country. His power over the Regent, Anne of Austria, was supreme. "*Il était fort séduisant.*" He had been a soldier, and soldiering had taught him ease and audacity; a diplomat, and diplomacy had trained him in grace and elegance. Women adored him; it seemed his destiny to succeed with them, for "he never sought such triumphs," says one biographer. We doubt that; and in the case of Anne, we deny it.

When Mazarin came to France, Court-life there was depressing to a degree. Louis XIII. cared for none of these things; the Queen, pushed aside by her husband and tormented by Richelieu, lived more like a nun than a great lady. Mazarin studied Anne—the elderly coquette, the lover of little attentions, compliments, love-laden glances. "*Elle aimait la belle galanterie:*" no one knew how to use it better than he did. Like a clever bézique-player, every point he had, he scored. Anne loved to hear her mother-tongue: this newcomer spoke Spanish. She was particularly vain of her beautiful white hands: Mazarin procured her scented gloves from Spain. She loved oranges: he got them for her in and out of season. She was very devout: he was a Prince of the Church. Even his looks! All the world has heard the malicious famous speech of Richelieu when Mazarin first appeared at Court: "*Madame, il vous plaira—il ressemble à Buckingham.*" . . . It is not the first time that a woman has looked favourably on the man who "reminded" her of another, and forgotten the remembrance in the reality. Moreover, Anne was lazy, and Mazarin took all the trouble of the Regency off her shoulders. Fans and perfumes, scented gloves and oranges, soft Spanish tongue—and no bother! Anne was lost. Idle to tell the oft-told tale of the riddle-letters, to discuss the problem of Mazarin's ecclesiastical position, of the secret marriage—enough that the Cardinal, in 1653, was supreme, and that Anne adored him.

Marie Mancini was then fourteen, and was living in Rome

with her mother. Her girlhood was unhappy. Madame Mancini had for her a very strong aversion. Mothers have disliked their daughters in many ages, but it has usually been because they have loved their sons too well. Not so in this case. Madame loved her other girls—Laure, who was lovable, and Olympe, who was not; Hortense, who was beautiful, and little Marianne, who was clever; Marie alone she not only did not love—she actively tormented.

When Mazarin summoned Madame Mancini to France, he instructed her to bring her eldest remaining daughter with her. This was Marie. But when the call arrived, Madame instantly thought of Hortense, "whose beauty," says Marie, in her touching book, *La Vérité dans son Jour*, "had given her the elder's privilege in my mother's affection." The orders, however, were explicit. Could Marie then be induced to remain behind in a cloister? . . . She was called upon to decide at once—we may imagine with how plain an indication of which would become her best. One can see the little figure—a sallow, undeveloped schoolgirl, fourteen, the awkward age!—standing before that unloving mother, to choose between life and death. Courage was not wanting. The child thought a moment; then she said that "there were convents everywhere, and that when it pleased Heaven to give her pious aspirations, she could follow them as easily in Paris as in Rome." Brilliant! Madame Mancini was beaten, but she had her alternative ready: Hortense should go too.

So they started. They travelled like queens, and descended at Aix, where the Duc de Mercœur (Laure Mancini's husband) was Governor. There they stayed eight months. No sooner had they settled down than the mother attempted to prejudice Mazarin against Marie. He had found pretty nieces useful—but what was he going to do with this *laideron?* Madame de Motteville shall draw her poor portrait. "She was tall, but so thin that her neck and arms looked positively wasted; and she was dark and sallow. Her eyes were big and black, but had as yet so little expression that they looked stupid; her mouth was large and thin-lipped, and except for her beautiful teeth, she was downright ugly." She was shy and awkward too, and only half-educated, for no one had taken any interest in her little lessons.

"Hortense had much the same defects," says Marie in her book, "but her youth and beauty were excuse enough for her."

"Put her in a convent!" It was the mother's fixed idea. "And may she never come out!" she might have added, for that was what she wanted—but though Mazarin did send Marie to a nunnery, he gave her hopes of coming out again by telling her that "she must try to put on a little flesh while she was there." So she went to her convent on April 1, 1654, fifteen years old. The Abbess quickly perceived that, in this girl, Mazarin had another niece to be reckoned with. Marie learned with dazzling rapidity; the most difficult subjects left undismayed her prehensile mind; and in addition to those solid gifts, she had the supreme one, the coal from the high altar, *le feu sacré!* Wit and intellect were to be her province, but she was to have, as well, the art to please. Courage we have already seen her display; pride she never failed in, nor generosity—"she was a madcap, yet the best of those Mazarin women." . . . She stayed in her convent eighteen months, and then Mazarin summoned her to the Court, which was at La Fère. The indefatigable uncle had already a *parti* in his eye—Armand de la Porte, son of the Marquis de la Meilleraye, Grand Master of the Artillery. Marie arrived, quite guileless; and it was then that it first occurred to her uncle that the young man might have something to say in the business. He had, and he said it.

"I will marry no one but Hortense Mancini. I am hers till death. If I could marry her, I would be content to die three months after!" These heroics were heard by Mazarin with angry contempt. He showed a delicate consideration for Marie's feelings by exclaiming that he would as soon allow Hortense to marry a lackey. . . . But Irony had marked the incident for her own. Not only did Mazarin allow that very niece to marry that very man, but he, who "if he could marry her would be content to die three months after," might well have been content if the gods had taken him at his word.

Marie, probably glad to escape the Grand Master at any cost, fretted not at all over her sister's triumph. But a bad time was coming. She was sent back to her mother at the Louvre. Madame Mancini was unchanged. All her five

daughters were with her now. Madame de Mercœur (Laure) had apartments in the same palace; Hortense lived with her; Olympe had her own rooms; and six-year-old Marianne, who had by this time been brought to the Land of Cockayne, was a precocious, amusing child, the delight of every one. Poor luckless, loveless Marie had to look on at all the petting. Her mother was towards her "so ill-tempered that it was unbearable." What a time it must have been! . . . Fifteen we are now, and conscious of our intellect; conscious, too, it may be, of what it might mean, one day, to be a charming woman. Beauty we do not hope for; at sixteen, mirrors speak but oracularly, and there are truth-tellers around us who speak not oracularly at all. But somewhere in our "subliminal consciousness," the dream of power seems not all a dream. We can see ourselves, feel ourselves, playing a big part—we could not dream so well if it were not to be. . . . The sisters may go to Court. We may not. We must spend the time in our dismal room ("I had for my only retreat, the worst of lodgings"), and so we dream, and we read—and we find such books! Uncle Mazarin does know about books! We find Ariosto, and in declaiming him to ourselves, we find that we have a most beautiful voice—an amorous, romantic voice. A mind and a voice! These are things worth having. Our room is hideous, our mother is hateful, our sisters are too enviable—but we have a mind and a voice. Alas, though! the bad hour comes—the hour when we think, "What is the good when no one knows, when no one hears?" . . .

The time of emancipation was at hand, nevertheless. At the end of 1656, Madame Mancini fell ill. What were Marie's feelings? They can hardly have been the normal daughter's, and their complexity was increased by a most disturbing element which entered her life with Madame's illness. This was the King himself, who visited the invalid every evening, and who, to reach the sick-room, was obliged to pass through one which adjoined Marie's. Soon he began to look for the vivacious figure, to feel disappointed when he did not see it, to kindle when he did—and he very often did. They talked together; longer and longer grew the stolen interviews. . . .

And Marie? Louis was surpassingly handsome, charming, beautifully dressed; he brought into her solitary life the sorcery of the great world; she was neglected, despised—he, the highest in the land, found her delightful . . . we may conjecture that she did not think, asked no questions, but took the goods the gods gave her, and walked blindly into her Fool's Paradise.

Madame Mancini died on December 19, 1656. Immediately afterwards Mazarin summoned Marie to Court. As she sagely says in the little brown book, "Contentment of mind always contributes to the favourable development of the body. . . . I was not recognizable!" She was to wait for forty to be actually beautiful, but at eighteen she was at any rate dangerously attractive. Her features were irregular, but her figure was exquisite; her eyes were large, black, and brilliant, her teeth lovely, and she showed them in a fascinating smile. Her face was one of those which speak; her voice was, as we know, enchanting. She was a daring talker, unconventional, natural, intense . . . Altogether, amid the Court beauties, like some rare foreign bird, and Louis quickly found the home-species insipid. Other women had suited themselves to him; this girl made him suit himself to her. She was much cleverer than the King, who danced and dressed divinely, but was totally unintellectual; she taught him Italian, reading Ariosto in the romantic voice; she talked with his Ministers and his brilliant men—politics with Lyonne or Servieu, morality with La Rochefoucauld, history with Saint-Evrémond, war with Turenne; and talked audaciously, wittily, created an atmosphere, stimulated, exhilarated. . . . Louis yielded wholly to her spell. Her power grew and grew; success was indeed succeeding. And then, just when intellect alone might have wearied, her heart was to have its part to play. The King fell dangerously ill. For a fortnight he lay in dire peril, and Marie was beside herself with grief. That was, it is true, the obligatory Court attitude; but Court anxiety and Marie's were of very different textures. Louis, recovering, heard of the daily inquiries, the tears, the wild and agonized anxiety—and realized that a dream was fulfilled. He was loved for himself!

Now all hesitation was over. Once recovered, he never left her side. She was romantically, incredibly happy. "Oh, Hortense, *you* must be in love with some one too!"—and the little lovely sister tried, but at twelve, found simpler joys more entertaining. Everything went on wheels. Even Uncle Mazarin was indulgent; the Queen was kind; the King grew more and more irresistible—for (says Mademoiselle de Montpensier) "ever since he has been in love with Mademoiselle Mancini, he has been in a good temper!"

But Uncle Mazarin was watching. The little game might serve a purpose. It should go on, until the moment came to stop it, and then the girl should pay for her audacity in defying him. For Marie did defy him. The memory of that humiliated girlhood was still alive. For two years after the mother's death, "I still felt over me the terror with which she had inspired me"—and the uncle lived, to be revenged upon. Assuredly she was no intriguer—a blunderer, rather. In this crisis, she set the two people who had most power over her destiny—Anne and Mazarin—passionately against her. Anne called her *that girl*—pregnant feminine phrase! Mazarin found her undermining his influence with Louis, spurring him on to emancipate himself, to take a real part in affairs. . . . But for the moment it suited the Cardinal's book to let the game go on.

Hints of a Royal Marriage are in the air, a marriage with Princess Margaret of Savoy—like Louis himself, a grandchild of Henri IV. The Princess will come to Lyons to meet the King, and then if he likes her——

The lovers are horrified. Is it serious? It is apparently serious. They consult together. If Anne goes to Lyons, Marie will have to go too—so Anne is implored to come, and she consents. Uncle Mazarin consents too. Wonderful!

On the way, the King is with us all the time. Romance is in the air. Carriages, chariots, lackeys, soldiers, groups of magnificent courtiers—a pageant like a fairy-tale. Crowds of gallants and fair ladies at the gates of every town to see the

King—so beautiful, distinguished, graceful. . . . It is all coming true. They ride together: the weather is cold—no matter! That keen wind whips a deeper carmine into the young happy faces. Lyons is reached on November 28th; the Savoy party arrive on December 2nd. The King rides out to meet them. Marie remains behind. He meets them—comes back in great glee to his mother's carriage. "She is smaller than Mademoiselle de Villeroy. She has a supple waist. Her complexion" —he hesitates . . . "Well, it's olive, but it suits her. She has fine eyes. I like her." He talks, indeed, gaily and familiarly to her—he who was wont to be silent with strangers! It is Marie who has taught him how to talk. . . . He rides along beside Princess Margaret's carriage.

And Marie is waiting, waiting. At last they arrive. Mademoiselle de Montpensier has the story ready: not a detail is spared us. We listen; we say nothing. But we have a long talk with Louis that evening. . . . "Aren't you ashamed that they should want to marry you to such an ugly bride?" . . . From that time, the King "entirely ignores the Princess." The marriage is *raté*. The Duke of Savoy, Margaret's brother, arrives at Lyons, expecting to find it settled; at the same moment, arrives an envoy from Spain, offering the Infanta's hand.

That was what Mazarin had wanted all along. The Savoy marriage was a trick to force Spain's hand. This was why he had permitted Anne to come, why Marie's presence had been encouraged: she made a convenient scape-goat!. The Spanish marriage was the very kernel of his policy. The Savoys might now take themselves off—and the sooner the better. The Duke departed in a towering rage. Madame Royale lamented in private; in public, she was cool. The Princess "showed no emotion whatever, except disdain."

The Savoy Court was gone, but the French Court lingered at Lyons. "The King went to see the Cardinal, and spent all the rest of the day with Mademoiselle Mancini. When the Queen dismissed us after supper, the King took Mademoiselle Mancini home. . . . Whenever there was a fine moonlit evening, he went to Bellecour. Mademoiselle Mancini was ill for two or

three days, and he went often to see her." Thus La Grande Mademoiselle, who had wished herself to marry "the King."

The Court returned to Paris in January, 1659. The King rode, and Marie rode beside him, ravishing in velvet doublet and black velvet cap with many feathers—the Court riding-dress. How the bright eyes must have gleamed and glowed beneath the little plumed cap, as the exquisite figure yielded to the motion of her spirited animal, chosen by the King himself!

> "What if Heaven just prove that he and I
> Ride, ride together, for ever ride?"

Paris, once reached, was gayer than ever. Dances, *fêtes-champêtres*, succeeded one another, and love was lord of all. Every fête was in honour of some fair—and the King was *her* gallant! She tells a charming anecdote of Louis as a lover. It was during a fête at Bois-le-Vicomte. Marie and the King were strolling in the woods, when, in some movement of hers, she knocked her hand against the pommel of the Royal sword, and bruised herself slightly. Louis took the sword from his belt, and flung it far into the thicket. . . . "I cannot describe the way he did it. There are no words for it."

A lover with such felicities at command turns life into a lyric. Bruises are covetable; Royal swords no doubt recovered tactfully by discreet lackeys—and so the weeks go by. But Mazarin and Anne are resolved to end this lyric; it is growing too ardent. . . . Pimentel, the Spanish envoy, is in Paris, and appears at a grand fête at Berny. He is confounded at the violence of the flirtation—"the King never left Mademoiselle Mancini's side"—and speaks to the Cardinal about it. At the same time, the King writes to ask the Uncle's permission to make Mademoiselle Mancini his wife. He is sternly refused. The overtures for the Spanish marriage are renewed; Anne is at Mazarin's feet, for this is the desire of her heart. . . . Decisive measures must now be taken with regard to Marie. She is ordered to leave France with her *gouvernante* and her two sisters, Hortense and Marianne. She is to go to La Rochelle.

What shall she do now? Why! she will appeal to Louis:

he will never let her go! Even Anne is scared: this is a drastic measure. The detested uncle ordains that the girl herself shall tell the King. She does not mind that: it will play her game for her. There is a terrible scene. Louis swears that nothing shall make him marry the Infanta. "You alone shall sit upon the throne of France. And then, think of all the obstacles that invariably arise in connection with these alliances!" . . . (Her comment on this, in the small brown book, is very poignant. "*Mais toutes les difficultés furent surmontées, et il n'y eut que mon malheur d'invincible.*") What can Louis do to show how much he means it? He can buy for her the Royal pearls of England! She has seen and admired them; now they are for sale, and she shall have them. "No, no!" says the girl, with a little theatrical touch of sadness. "Henceforth I shall have nowhere to wear them." He pleads, and at last she accepts. He writes at once, ordering them to be bought for him, and gets the money from Mazarin, who cannot refuse his King! Events hurry now. Louis has an interview with his mother, and comes away from it "with red eyes" . . . Marie is to go. But he has extracted a promise to be allowed to see her later on at Bayonne, and in the meantime, to correspond with her. She listens. Her heart sinks. The impossible has happened: he has let her go! . . . She goes, the next day. "The King bursts into tears as he hands her into her carriage." She looks at him. The black eyes are tender, but they flash a little; the wonderful voice quivers, but has it not a touch of scorn somewhere . . .

"*Sire, vous êtes roi; vous pleurez; et je pars!*"

All the magic of the tender, brilliant creature speaks in that immortal good-bye. He loves her—yet he has failed her.

But it was not yet the end. She started on her journey, and fell ill at Notre-Dame de Cléry. The King did not know; he wrote every day, and wondered to get no answers. At last a confidant heard, and hastened to inform him. He sent a musketeer post-haste to inquire. Just then, Anne arrived at Chantilly, and was freezingly received. She asked for news of Marie. "It is idle to ask for news of people whom one is trying to kill," thundered the King. . . . He sent Marie his portrait;

musketeers arrived with letters wherever the girl stopped—and all the letters were answered. Mazarin suggested a less remarkable method of communication; the King took not the least notice. The Cardinal was nearly off his head with worry, and the more, because sentimental Anne was beginning to side with her son. He was so unhappy! She adored him; she loved a lover; she was not over-scrupulous. Why shouldn't he marry, and love Mademoiselle Mancini all the same?

The Court moved to Bayonne. Louis had been promised that he should see Marie on the way. Mazarin tried to break the compact, but Anne insisted that they should meet. They met. Much was said, vowed, wept—and all it came to was a counsel of despair. Louis swore that he would be faithful, "even if he had to marry the Infanta." This was a lower note than "You alone shall sit upon the throne of France." With what a sure prevision she must have heard it! And in truth it was the end. The King was on his way to make the final arrangements for his marriage.

As soon as Marie was convinced of this, she wrote and told him that all was over, that she would not answer his letters, and did not wish to receive them. She sent to Mazarin a proud, cold note, telling him what she had done. He answered with pæans of praise. . . . We can guess with what a look upon the speaking face that letter was read!

On June the 2nd, 1660, Louis XIV. and Marie-Thérèse, Infanta of Spain, were married by proxy. Shortly afterwards, they met for the first time. . . . Marie Mancini heard the Court-gossip. *The King is very much in love with the young Princess.*

"Say horrid things about him, Hortense—point out all his faults to me!"

More poignant words were never uttered. The heart still aches to read them. . . .

The King is in love with the young Queen; and here is Prince Charles of Lorraine, a suitor for our hand. He is very handsome, and he is head over ears in love with us. How do we look now? "Very red lips, very white teeth, very black hair, a dark skin, a large nose; mouth and eyes lifted at the corners,

quaintly, almost comically." But it was not her looks; it was a "voluptuous fascination which gave men up to her as her slaves." She and Prince Charles used to meet in secret—she, with her proud, bitter, doubting heart. . . . Yes—she would have married him. But Mazarin said No. He wanted to get her out of France. She came back to Court first, though; she had to see it all.

On the way back from his marriage, Louis had left his Queen at Saintes, to go upon a pilgrimage to "the sacred places of his love." He had the instinct for romance, the dramatic instinct which had made him so felicitous a lover. She should see that his heart was still aflame! Naturally he felt strongly when, after such an exquisite display, he heard that she had a new lover already. He had a new wife, it was true—but that was different. He never really forgave her. He received her coldly; he praised the Queen to her; she flew out in her impetuous way—he snubbed her. "She withdrew hastily." . . . It was a grievous time, for Charles had already consoled himself; the poor child had two faithless ones to despise. But a new suitor arrived: the Prince Colonna, Grand Constable of Naples. That marriage was arranged, but Mazarin died before it came off. On March 9th, 1661, the waiting family heard the news. "*Pure é crepato!*" ("At last we have got rid of him!") they cried in chorus—and of the many unlovable things they did, this ranks easily among the first.

Marie and Prince Colonna—handsome, gallant, devoted—were married nearly a year later than Louis and Marie-Thérèse. At the wedding, Marie showed no emotion. "She said firmly the 'Yes' which was to bind her to a stranger . . . then her eyes turned, with an ineffable expression, towards the King, who went pale as he met them."

She never saw Louis again.

The Prince at first won her heart by his devotion; they lived happily enough in Rome for some years. She had three sons; in the intervals, lived a gay life, surrounded by her own French set. After the third confinement, she announced that she would not risk her life again. Colonna acquiesced—with the usual consequences; and Marie came to know of it. In 1669, things

came to a head. She had Hortense to encourage her—naughty, lovely Hortense, now Duchesse de Mazarin. She had married that very de la Meilleraye, whom Mazarin had disdained ; he had inherited Mazarin's name, as well as his enormous fortune. Hortense found him quite impossible : here she was, accordingly, in Rome. With this daring example before her, Marie began to think of running away from *her* husband. For three years she debated ; then, on May 29th, 1672, she took the step which proved irrevocable. Hortense and she embarked, at Civita Vecchia, in a skiff which brought them, after a week, to the coast of Provence.

Her great hope was that Louis would authorise her return to Paris. She wrote long letters imploring his protection ; and Louis, who "made a rule of being grateful to the ladies who had loved him," accorded it, but was quickly influenced against her by Madame de Montespan, now *maîtresse-en-titre*. He took back his permission to come to Paris, and coldly advised her to enter a convent. She was provided with money, but forbidden to come to Court.

Thenceforward began that distracted existence—her Odyssey ! —which seems to have so little relation to reality. Convents at Aix, at Fontainebleau, at Reims, at Lyons, Turin, Madrid, Segovia—convents, and escapes from convents ; a short reconciliation with Colonna at Madrid,—but never life together again . . . It was not till near the end, when she was sixty-six years old, that Marie Mancini Colonna revisited Paris. Louis was sixty-seven. He sent a graceful message—but each knew that it was better not to meet. She had "lost all her good looks ; she thought of nothing but her health, ate little, cooked her meals in her own room, walked a lot, and laughed at the fashions." He "slept badly, often awoke with a start, had bad dreams, and needed continual care . . ."

"*Oh, les rêves du passé, après cinquante ans !*"

She had had another Royal or semi-Royal lover, Charles-Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, the very Duke who had come to Lyons at the time of the marriage-fiasco ! He was a dangerously

MARIE DE MANCINI

From an Old Print

attractive man, and he lost his heart completely to the irresistible Marie. She gave him any amount of trouble; he was unfailingly kind, but she left his Court in a fury, because he —a martyr to conscience!—would kéep on advising her to return to her husband.

Of what avail to follow her through the maze of her wanderings? After her happy years at the Court of Savoy, she went to Frankfort, Cologne, Antwerp, Brussels—finally, Madrid. There another lover sprang up—the Almirante of Castile, "one of the greatest gentlemen of Spain." She had a brilliant career in Madrid. We get such pictures of her as these:—"She had the most divine figure—*un corps à l'espagnole*; and great masses of hair, tied on top with a flame-coloured ribbon." "She had a little excited sort of manner, which wouldn't suit every one, but did suit her." "Her skin is clear, her figure is charming; she has beautiful eyes, beautiful teeth, beautiful hair." . . . Charles-Emmanuel died in 1675. Her epitaph for him was, "I have never known a Prince so faithful in absence as he." But the Almirante had intervened! Then came Don Juan of Austria. . . . In 1689, Colonna died. He made a good end, exonerating his wife from all blame, and leaving her his engagement-ring. Marie was terribly distressed by his death; she forgot all but the first happy years—and perhaps it was a little like the feeling of the cage-bird set at liberty! She had had "prison-bars" to beat against nearly all her life.

She stayed at Madrid till 1691—then Alicante saw her, then at last France. Then back to Rome, for a little while, then again Madrid—for Spain was the country of her adoption. She was happy there; she won all hearts, she liked Spanish ways and fashions, she spoke Spanish perfectly—in the voice "which every-one who ever heard it, speaks of."

There let us leave her.

"She may have saved Louis XIV. from being another Louis XV. She was the first to awaken in him feeling and thought; she made him understand *ideas*. Perhaps, at her obscure death, she could contemplate proudly the reign of Louis XIV. She had had but one page of it, but that page was her whole life." . . . She kept all through her troubled existence—wearing them

on her bosom, underneath her dress—the Royal pearls of England, which Louis had given her at the crisis of their destinies.

She died quite suddenly in the house of a Spanish monk at Pisa, in 1715, and was buried in the Church of St. Sepulchre. She made her own epitaph—with the genius for expression which had been hers through all her life.

Very short it is and very simple, like her other, her immortal good-bye:—

"MARIE MANCINI COLONNA
CENDRES ET POUSSIÈRE."

LOLA MONTEZ

1818–1861

HER Majesty's Theatre was crowded on the night of June 10, 1843. A new Spanish dancer was announced: "Donna Lola Montez." It was her *début*, and Lumley, the manager, had been puffing her beforehand, as he alone knew how. To Lord Ranelagh, the leader of the dilettante group of fashionable young men, he had whispered mysteriously, "I have a surprise in store. *You shall see.*" So Ranelagh and a party of his friends filled the omnibus-boxes, those tribunes at the side of the stage whence Success or Failure was pronounced. Things had been done with Lumley's consummate art: the packed house was murmurous with excitement. She was a raving beauty, said report—and then, those intoxicating Spanish dances! Taglioni, Cerito, Fanny Elssler: all were to be eclipsed. Ranelagh's glasses were steadily levelled on the stage from the moment her entrance was imminent. She came on. There was a murmur of admiration—but Ranelagh made no sign. And then she began to dance. A sense of disappointment, perhaps? But she was very lovely, very graceful, "like a flower swept by the wind, she floated round the stage"—not a dancer, but, by George! a beauty. . . . And still Ranelagh made no sign. Yet no! What low sibilant sound is that? And then, what confused angry words from the tribunal? He turns to his friends, his eyes ablaze with anger, opera-glass in hand. . . . And now again, the terrible "Hiss-s-s!", taken up by the other box, and the words repeated loudly and more angrily even than before—the historic words which sealed Lola's doom at Her Majesty's Theatre: "*Why, it's Betty James!*"

It was Betty James; and James was the woman's married name. Betty was not her name at all. Betty was the *nom de circonstance*—the mark of her calling, so to speak. James, the husband, had been left behind in India when his wife returned to England in 1842, and a divorce had been pronounced in the December of the same year—the lady making no defence. And now the new leaf, inscribed "Lola Montez," had got smudged at the very beginning! The *Era*, sworn to support Lumley, exhausted itself in panegyric: "As in a dream, an Elssler or a Taglioni descends from the clouds. Donna Lola enchanted every one. We have only one fault to find with the dance—it was too short." . . . No use! Ranelagh's exclamation had had the accent of truth: this was Betty James—not Donna Lola. Moreover, whichever she might have been, she could not dance. Lumley flatly refused to allow her to appear again, for Ranelagh the Patron was wild with fury. Under his behaviour the gossips scented a mystery: was he a rejected lover? In a curious, flippant, scandalous American book, with the extraordinary title, *You have heard of Them*, by a writer calling himself "Q," it is more than hinted that Ranelagh (during the period of study in Madrid which the "Spanish dancer" really *had* gone through) had approached her with "more ardour than delicacy," and had perhaps received one of those boxes on the ear which afterwards resounded all over Europe, America, and Australia. But whatever he had had to endure from the madcap beauty, he had his full revenge now; for Betty James first wept bitterly, then instantly left the theatre—and the country.

Who was she? She was Marie-Dolorès-Eliza-Rosanna Gilbert, daughter of an ensign in the Forty-fourth Foot, who, against the wishes of his father, Sir Edward Gilbert ("more Irish than the Irish!"), had married "a lovely Creole dancer, Lola Oliver." So the biographers say; but hear the daughter's version. "My mother was an Oliver of Castle Oliver; her family-name was that of a Spanish noble family of Montalvo, whose blood was originally Moorish. Irish and Spanish-Moorish blood: a somewhat combustible compound!" Dolorès

("Lola") was born in Limerick in 1818—or 1824, as she herself affirmed. Alas! the six extra years are but too well attested. . . . The old Gilberts cast their erring son to the winds with his lovely Oliver of Castle Oliver; and after Lola's birth he went to India, taking his young wife with him. In 1825, he died of cholera, leaving the seventeen-year-old widow penniless; but she quickly married again—this time a Colonel, Craigie by name, and Deputy-Adjutant-General of the Forces in India. Mrs. Craigie soon settled down, and became "quite a nice, decorous person." That was more than the small lovely daughter did, and conscientious Colonel Craigie ("a sort of Dobbin," we learn) noticed the daily deterioration. Those Hindu servants! Heaven alone knew what they were teaching her—among other things, to dance "in their style." . . . The sooner she was packed home the better! Home, accordingly, she went in 1826, just eight years old; and education in Scotland, Paris, Bath, followed, Lola signalizing the later years of it by the obligatory flirtation with her music-master. Her mother was now living in Bath, but she seemed on the wing for India, and Lola was to go with her, and Lola was to have the loveliest dresses! The dresses were a little too lovely—they almost looked like trousseau-gowns. "They *are* trousseau-gowns," said a young Captain Thomas James, of the Twenty-first Bengal Foot, whom the startled girl consulted. "Your mother wants to marry you to an old man out there—Sir Abraham Lumley, a rich old rascal of a Judge, and sixty if he's a day."

"But what shall I do?"

"Elope with me," says Captain James—and elope they did the very next day to Ireland, and were married at Meath on July 23, 1837. They went first to Dublin, and there the first indication of what was to be in the future Lola's peculiar spell made itself apparent. "She had a marvellous fascination for Sovereigns and Ministers," says the *Dictionary of National Biography*; and sure enough, the Irish Viceroy, Lord Normanby, fell at once a victim. Captain James, who was genuinely in love, felt very unhappy. Normanby would draw his bride into alcoves, would whisper intoxicating flatteries in her ear. . . . She must come away from Dublin! He took her down to his country-

house in Westmeath, where the only distraction (she said) was tea-drinking—and we, knowing what country-life in Ireland is for those who do not hunt or shoot, can affirm that when she said this it was one of the few occasions in her life when she told the truth. Moreover, James had proved to be only the "outside shell of a husband . . . he had neither a brain which she could respect, nor a heart possible for her to love," and she adds the striking aphorism: "Runaway matches are like runaway horses —sure to end in a smash-up. Better hang or drown yourself before you start."

Not much foresight, indeed, was needed to divine the future. After the Westmeath period they sailed for India, James going to rejoin his regiment. On board ship Mrs. James had three admirers, while her husband, vigilant only for Viceroys, "drank porter and slept like a boa-constrictor." The Afghan Campaign found her still with him, however. So alert, indeed, had James now again become, that he would not leave her behind and took her with him everywhere in a palanquin. Lola thoroughly enjoyed it; but, to quote from one chronicler, "by the time the campaign was over, James's happiness was over, too." Captain Lennox, A.D.C. to Lord Elphinstone, was the co-respondent in the undefended action for divorce, James *v.* James: heard in London on December 16, 1842. She had gone home in that year, as we have seen, and Lennox had been on board the same ship. He was madly in love, crazy to marry her. His family, however, stopped that. The law would have stopped it in any case, for the final order for the divorce in the Consistory Court had not been made—and even Lola never quite succeeded in being allowed to commit bigamy unmolested, though she *did*, in later years, commit it, and took refuge in Spain to escape punishment.

After the *fiasco* at Her Majesty's, we hear of Lola Montez in Dresden, Berlin, Warsaw, Paris; and wherever we hear of her, we hear of scandals too, mostly connected with boxes on the ears and horsewhips—and strangely monotonous, when the first shock of novelty is over. Berlin saw a very famous interlude in this sort with a gendarme. During some manœuvres, her horse took

fright at the shots, and ran into the Sovereign's *entourage*. The gendarme, horrified, caught the horse, hit it violently, and violently reproved the rider. Out flashed the horsewhip—and was stoutly used. The gendarme brought an action for assault, but to no purpose, for the Sovereign had been "much amused." Her spell was evidently working again. . . . In Paris she failed once more as a dancer, for Paris was used to Taglioni. "I am sick of being told I can't dance," cried Lola. The things Lola did to show how sick she was of it! To make faces at the audience was a mere nothing: silken garters were flung in *their* faces, attendants were of course horsewhipped—yet Paris, odd inconsequent city, remained faithful to its dull Taglioni with her long petticoats! Lola was not concerned with petticoats —nor with still more necessary garments . . . and when the *maillot* was actually dispensed with one night, the maddened manager braved the lash, and cancelled the too-unconventional engagement.

Albert Vandam met her in Paris, and heard many confidences. He kept his head—not being a Sovereign or a Minister—and regarded her with clear, critical eyes. "That *quasi*-wonderful woman!" for there was nothing wonderful about her, he says, except her beauty and her impudence. "She had not a scrap of talent of any kind, nor had she the most elementary notions of manner and address;" but he frankly adds that many men, far more highly gifted than himself, were completely overthrown: "they raved and kept raving of her."

Dujarrier, the brilliant young journalist who worked under Émile Girardin on *La Presse*, was her lover in these Paris days. He perceived in her the material for an admirable political spy—she had original ideas, an original way of expressing them, a strong mind, capable of grasping and interpreting situations, and "generous views of life." He undertook her political education, and turned her out an agitator, an intriguer of the first order. According to every one but sceptical Vandam, indeed, he made her also into an accomplished woman of the world, a hostess, a salonist second to none—and then Dujarrier, only twenty-nine, was killed in a duel forced upon him by Beauvallon, a rival journalist on *Le Globe*. It was the

famous *affaire* Beauvallon. Dujarrier was said to have been assassinated: the arms had been tried all the morning by Beauvallon, who was a "dead shot," while Dujarrier knew no more of pistols than a baby. "I don't know why I'm fighting," he said pathetically to the great Dumas on the day. And then he exposed himself insanely, all unwitting as he was, and the adversary took advantage. . . . There was a huge scandal. Beauvallon was tried at Rouen, and Lola insisted on giving evidence. She had met her lover's dead body as they carried it home, had thrown herself upon it, covered the face with kisses—and Paris, inconsequent as ever, had made a heroine of her for five days! Five days was too short an apotheosis: "I *must* give evidence at Rouen."

"She had nothing to tell," affirms Vandam; "she merely wanted to create a sensation; and so she did when, dressed in soft masses of black silk and lace, she raised the veil from her face at last"—and the court breathed one long sigh of ecstasy! Young Gustave Flaubert was present, and some one said excitedly to him, "Doesn't she look just like the heroine of a novel?"

"Yes," said the future creator of Madame Bovary. "Except that the heroines of the real novels enacted in every-day life do not look like that."

Dujarrier's death was a singularly moving tragedy, but he left his Lola 20,000 francs and shares in the Palais-Royal, so the tragedy proved to be the turning-point in her career. No more singing in the streets—she had done that in Varsovia—no more Ranelaghs and Normanbys and abominable old Polish Princes like him who had brought about her expulsion from Warsaw. The curtain was really going up this time: the play had begun in real earnest. Once more as a mere dancer she might be going to make her entrance—but wait and see!

"There was a king in Thule." . . . There was the oddest king, just then, in Bavaria! Ludwig I.—"a Lovelace with a touch of the Minnesinger about him," said one observer; "a mixture of Haroun-al-Raschid and Henri IV.," said another; "the most meritorious and remarkable of European monarchs,"

LOLA MONTEZ

From an Old Print

declared a third. We can put together an eccentric, lovable creature out of these materials: a king who had ideals as well as queer ways, who saw the good clearly, though he made for it with a spiritual gait as droll as his physical one. He had come to the throne filled full with liberal ideas. He had ardently desired to give his people a large share of political freedom, for he profoundly admired the English system: Reform was in the very forefront of his programme. But then came the Revolution of 1830. He paused. And while he paused, the Reactionary, the Ultramontane, Party in Bavaria saw their opportunity. They already were in power; the Ministry was purely Ultramontane. It had been hostile from the first to the King's liberal leanings; now was the hour to press opposition home. "This is the result of those liberties which you propose to give the people." So the Jesuits murmured unceasingly in his ear—and at last their subtle poison worked. The King renounced his ideas; despotism should reign again—but a benevolent despotism: "the rod in one hand, the sugar-plum in the other." . . . That was still good, sentimental Ludwig's hope. Only, as any one but he might have known, instead of a benevolent despotism, what ensued was black bigotry: Bavaria was thrall to the "most insatiate, arbitrary, and intolerant of all foreign mistresses—we mean the Church of Rome, as represented by the Order of the Jesuits." (So *The Times* thundered in 1848.) The disappointed King did all he could to forget. He threw himself heart and soul into the artistic life of his country, he made Munich a metropolis instead of a provincial town, he worked enormously, spent enormously, made enormous sacrifices. . . . But for all his goodness, he had "odd ways that made the people laugh." An eccentric born, he never taught himself to accept that etiquette which is the Master's Master. He never used a carriage; he walked everywhere—and he went everywhere. Like Haroun, he loved the surprise-visit; unlike Haroun, he was ridiculous in his excessive jealousy for his authority. He would knock off a tardily-doffed hat with a turn of the wrist, as he passed the delinquent in his odd zigzag progress. He had a picture-gallery filled with portraits of the "beauties" who had come to Munich from every quarter of the globe, and there he was wont to sit and meditate—and write

poetry! A king who writes poetry is a king who writes his abdication in advance. Ludwig I., come to the throne with all sorts of liberal projects fermenting in his brain, was now, in 1847, the tool of the Ultramontane Party—the very Party he had sworn to oppose. Tall, well-developed, with a strongly-marked angular face, an absent-minded yet piercing glance, the most peculiar walk in the world—"like forked lightning"!—and the most peculiar dress: English cutaway coat closely buttoned to his spare figure, tight trousers with gaiters, a hat of no accepted shape . . . such a fox-hunting country-squire of sixty winters was he to look upon when Lola Montez came to Munich.

She came as a dancer to the theatre—another beauty for the picture-gallery! Perhaps that was all that any one thought at first. Ludwig was a true king in his leaning towards the "pretty horse-breaker" type of woman. "Here's a new dancer at the theatre," said the Jesuits. "That will amuse him, that will keep him from interfering with affairs." And from the very first night, the King was captivated. He lost no time, or perhaps it was Lola who lost no time. . . . Whichever it was, in five days after her *début* the King formally introduced her at Court, saying to those assembled: "Gentlemen, I present you to my best friend."

Is not the curtain up? This is a *début* indeed—the One and Only; and Ranelagh and Betty James are gone, and Dujarrier is forgotten and all his "crowd" in Paris—Vandam with his covert sneers and open insolences, Flaubert with his epigrams, Dumas . . . What was it Dumas said? "*She has the evil eye. She will bring bad luck to every man who links his destiny with hers.*" When Dujarrier's dead body was brought back, those words had jingled in our ear for a minute, it may be. But—*Zut alors, gros papa Dumas!* Here we are, a King's Favourite. . . . Or was it quite the other way? Was Lola the paid agent of high political personages, a puppet turned out by the dead Dujarrier, and now bought at a price by those who were hostile to Austria? Biographers—she had twenty-four!—differ: most are for the adventuress pure and simple, others take her seriously as a factor in somebody's game. We incline to the adventuress theory. Her talk with Vandam in Paris leaves

no doubt as to her purpose in life. "Candour," he says, "was her best trait," and he gives us indeed a striking proof of that in the conversation he recounts, where she passes the European monarchs in review, and comments "candidly"—pass the kindly word!—on the possibilities of each. The only wonder was that she should have hesitated at all when there existed Ludwig of Bavaria. From 1847 to 1848, she ruled him utterly. Within a month of her arrival, she was made Countess of Landsfeld; a beautiful house was then built for her, and a pension accorded of 20,000 florins. Von Abel, Ultramontane, was at the head of the Ministry. At first there was harmony. The Jesuits were making their plans to "use" the favourite, and she, not yet *au courant* with affairs, was provisionally acquiescent. Then Von Abel struck a discord boldly. Like another Choiseul, he opposed the public shameless liaison—and at once the Jesuits were against him. Lola dealt with the situation quite methodically. Von Abel was dismissed from office; Prince Wallerstein, his creature, exalted to his place; then she faced the Jesuits and Austria. For with fuller knowledge, she now saw that these were her rivals with the King; she could not wholly subjugate him until they were gone. What should be her banner? Ah! the Code Napoléon, that Magna Charta of France. Ludwig was well inoculated with the Code Napoléon, and then it only remained to form a party. But this was not easy, for she was desperately unpopular. The liaison does not flourish on German soil, and Ludwig was tactless—humiliations had been inflicted on the Queen. She was forced to receive, to decorate with her own Order, the Countess of Landsfeld. Munich gnashed its teeth. This swearing, horse-whipping, ear-boxing Countess, forsooth! swaggering down our streets with a ferocious bull-dog at her heels—a bull-dog who has an unerring scent for Jesuit priests. . . . Munich hissed, foamed at the mouth: should she any longer be suffered? Agitators went about the city, stirring up discontent everywhere, and the University students, ever spoiling for a fight, were already well infected when what does the impudent woman do but try to add an "Association" of her own to the historic University Five! *Allemania* she called it; there were sixteen or twenty of them, and they wore bright

scarlet caps. The Creature's Creatures! 'Twas not to be borne. When in February, 1848, Term began, there was open war. The Allemanien were hissed, insulted, hooted, no one would stay in class when they appeared—it was the boycott in full blast. Very soon it was riot in full blast. Daggers flashed, and pistols threatened to flash; an "Alleman" was arrested, and Lola, summoned to his rescue, came audaciously alone. The *coup* failed; hearts were not won—she was hustled, insulted, actually ill-treated; the Legation shut its doors, no one came to *her* rescue. . . . Stay—some one came: the King himself. He heard of the tumult, left a party in the Palace, rushed to protect his Lolotte: on his arm she was led to safety, and turning, as the door moved to behind her, she fired her pistol into the mob! It hurt no one, but that, we may be sure, was not her intention. Next week, a Royal Decree proclaimed the University shut for a whole year. . . . Now it was no longer riot, but Revolution in full blast. The mob held the city; Munich demanded the banishment of Lola Montez. Wallerstein, whom she had placed in power, was the most insistent of all. Ludwig passionately refused: "I would rather lose my crown." Grimly the Chamber of Peers regarded him: who could know how much of choice there was, how long poor Ludwig would keep either? For the moment there was *no* choice: Lola Montez must go . . . On March 17, 1848, Munich was reading this decree:

"We, by the Grace of God King of Bavaria, etc., think it necessary to declare that the Countess of Landsfeld has ceased to possess the rights of naturalization in Bavaria.

"LOUIS."

And, next day:

"Seeing that the Countess of Landsfeld . . . does not renounce her design of disturbing the peace of the Capital and country, all the judicial and police authorities of the Kingdom have received orders to pursue the said Countess wherever she may be found, to arrest her, and carry her to the nearest fortress, there to be placed in the hands of the Law" . . .

But by that time, Lola was gone, and Ludwig, maddest of monarchs, was watching the sack of her house, and getting a looking-glass broken over his head by an ardent Patriot! Was

it sentiment, or cynicism, or utter insanity at last? Perhaps she came back on purpose to see—for she *did* come back, disguised as a boy, and had a three-hours' interview with her King. What they said, what either desired, history knows not surely. All it does know is that Ludwig "was forced" to abdicate. *Promised* to abdicate, said Lola—"for I could not endure that he should himself destroy the reforms he had made. It was best for his own fame. He promised; and Lola went out in her boy's disguise, to look upon the turrets and spires of Munich for the last time." Shall we give her the last word? It must have been bitter enough, whatever be the truth. What a short run the play had had, which had promised so well! It had seemed to be going to run as long as we liked, and then, and then . . . was it the horsewhip, the bull-dog, the thrashed servants? No, no! it was the Jesuits, the black gentry, the—the— She had all the epithets at her tongue's tip, be sure! Did she again, we wonder, remember fat old *papa* Dumas in Paris? Here was another man who had linked his destiny with hers—and into what destruction had she led him! At any rate, she abandoned him then, to work out the rest of his destiny alone. The Countess of Landsfeld was dead, as Betty James was dead—but still there was Lola Montez.

In 1849, England—and bigamy: a cornet in the Life-Guards, one George Trafford Heald, only twenty-one, married her—and within a fortnight of the marriage, they were summoned for bigamy. That final order had not been made out yet! They fled to Spain for safety, "and there she is said to have borne two sons to Heald." And then—Heald accidentally drowned at Lisbon, and *papa* Dumas eerily recalled once more. . . . After that, all downhill. America, Australia: another short-lived marriage; horse-whippings, a fight tooth-and-nail with a lusty virago at Melbourne, and Lola left fainting on the ground. . . . Surely the last word of squalor? And so it proved, for there came lectures on the Art of Beauty, on Gallantry, on Heroines—lectures written for her by a clergyman! They were quite a success, but she soon ran through the money. Finally, good works and another clergyman; conversion, little pious books; a Magdalen-Asylum-angel, all dark hair and pallor and remorse.

Paralysis then, suffering, death in 1861 (aged only forty-three), and a tablet to her memory in the Greenwood Cemetery, New York.

She never betrayed a secret. Let that be our epitaph, for somehow we do not quite dislike Lola Montez. "Perhaps," she wrote in her Autobiography, "the noblest courage is, after all, to dare to meet one's self." Well, she shirked *that* adventure, for never did autobiographist embroider more bewilderingly—but it was vanity that lied, not fear. The frank, clear eyes look back at us, and tell us we are right. Lola Montez never was afraid. We wish she had been more like her eyes in other ways: they are so charming!

THE COURTESAN

TULLIA D'ARAGONA

1505–1556

AROUND those fanatics of the soul and of the intellect whom we call the Platonist women of the Renaissance, there floats the aroma of a sort of divine silliness which proves them to have been the genuine "complex" feminine article. To themselves, no doubt, they seemed as simple as to any one else they can seem enigmatic; for that is the mark of true complexity—to be passionately convinced of its own entire simplicity. Hence, perhaps, it is that women, who from the beginning have enjoyed and exploited a reputation for extreme incomprehensibility, are able to regard these illustrious ladies with a more humorous eye than are their male chroniclers. These, for the most part, seem reduced to the secular masculine device of waving helpless hands and "giving it up." Yet, period apart, customs of their time apart, the Platonist Women are no more perplexing than are their sisters of a later age. Exquisite blunderers, failing in a purpose through one method, and turning instantly, with woman's incomparable blend of perseverance and forgetfulness, to its direct opposite, they seem near us as any madcap of to-day—inconsequent yet undeviating, changeful yet unchanged; the old enigma that is no enigma, the sphinx with the secret trembling on her lips, and held back only because the potential hearers are sceptical of understanding, should they consent to listen!

It was with sincerity and ardour that they made their experiments. No playing with edged tools for them, but earnest and most valiant using of them. Restless we call them—yet of what patience were they capable; luxurious, yet no ladies of any age endured more hardships. Read an account of almost any

wedding! The bride seemed invariably to go half-way to meet the bridegroom, and the depth of winter was the fashionable season for marriages—the depth of winter, and the travelling-facilities of the period! "The luckless brides had to face heavy snowstorms and tempest, cross rivers in flood, or ride over the Alpine passes in mid-December." . . . Eager for excitement, too, these ladies have been dubbed—yet through what almost fathomless dullness could they beautifully wade! Often there rises to the imagination an Italian salon of those days, where met the lovely and the learned to hear and join in those "disputes" which now seem so interminably vapid. Such a salon, for example, as that of Tullia d'Aragona in Rome or in Ferrara—Tullia, "one of the most famous of Italian poetesses," say some chroniclers; "a courtesan," remarks bluntly another, who adds that her Book on Platonic Love had a wide and excellent influence!

"The offspring of love," says Roscoe, austerely gossipping under cover of a note, in his *Life of Leo X.*, "Tullia is said not to have been insensible to its dictates." "She was the child of love, and she lived in its service," says another historian, more ironically; and John Addington Symonds tells us that in a rare tract (with an impossible title) she is catalogued among the courtesans of Venice. Crescimbeni, in his *Storia della Volgar Poesia*, mentions that she lived "for a short time there." The short time and the rare tract, considered together, cannot but make the judicious grieve; yet let them not condemn her hastily, for if heredity be the force we now believe in, how should Tullia d'Aragona have been virtuous? She was the natural daughter of Cardinal Pietro Tagliava, Archbishop of Palermo, himself an illegitimate descendant of the Royal House of Aragon, which once had reigned at Naples; and her mother was the most famous beauty of her day in all Italy, Giulia di Ferrara—toast of Rome, splendid and shameless courtesan, of whose sumptuous ways of living contemporary song-writers satirically rhymed, putting their boasts, for better bitterness, into the mouth of the lady herself. Tullia set up house, in later days, at that Ferrara whence her lovely mother came. "Here are fair streets and very handsome palaces," says one Lassels, who visited it on

his travels; and he adds, with delightful inconsequence, "But people are somewhat thin."

Alessandro Zilioli, the most attractive of Tullia's biographers, says with an ineffable sweet Italian gravity, that the Cardinal "received furtively from Giulia this little girl." At any rate, he provided for her handsomely and apparently not furtively, since all her chroniclers seem well informed as to the source of her income. She was born in 1505, and she passed her childhood in diligent study "amid the delights and comforts of an assured fortune," blossoming bravely in the exotic atmosphere, becoming indeed a wonder-child—remarkable even in the throng of wonder-children of that epoch—for at the awkward age, Tullia "would hold arguments and disputations with many very learned gentlemen." They heard her, "not without stupor," says delicious Zilioli. One seems to recognize that stupor.

But better times were coming, when something more inspiring than stupor was to reward her. Tullia was to come into her own, prove herself true woman—and now she instantly, as the saying goes, takes shape for the imagination. For she dressed divinely! All her chroniclers are men, and every one of them remarks upon her talent in this sort. In those days, indeed, there was little scope for originality in dress; gorgeousness there was, but individual good taste was rare. Grace, the imperative qualification for a latter-day beauty, could hardly, one thinks, have been perceptible then—picturing to one's-self the stiff, the pitilessly boned and laced-up jacket which was "slipped" (Maulde la Clavière tells us) "*into* the wide-sleeved damask cloak." The bodice was made of stout cloth, and was usually crimson. . . . But furs and gems and lace were worn as well, and worn in full magnificence; caps were "bossed with garnets and pearls," dresses were "buttoned down the front with ruby studs and bound with lacets of massive gold," white velvet gowns were richly trimmed with pearls; necklaces and tiaras of diamonds and rubies were part of the daily afternoon toilet; sleeves were "lined with ermine, or some other costly fur" (they were surely oppressive in magnificence for indoor wear)—Tullia must have swept into her little court of adorers, glittering and glimmering like a Fairy-Queen in a pantomime!

Zilioli does not quite approve. Somehow one pictures him as a grave, sweet-faced humorist, recalling Tullia—and others, many others—with searching, mystical, yet appreciative vision. He does not approve, but he understands. "She looked so beautiful," he says—*tanta leggiadria, tanta venustà*—"that when one added to the charm of her personality" (he speaks out bluntly here!) "*l'ornamento degli abiti lascivi*," he found it impossible to recall to life any one more enchanting than Tullia must have been.

But we can see her for ourselves, in Bonvicino's (Il Moretto's) portrait of her in the Tosio Gallery at Brescia. Few more exquisite pictures than this are anywhere in the world to be seen.

"As if she were weary, she leans her arm upon a marble slab. . . . She wears a rich dress of pale-blue velvet, half covered by a pelisse lined with red velvet; and in her hair are intertwined narrow pale-blue ribbons with strings of fine pearls. . . . The Raphaelesque grace and the vigorous Venetian colouring add wonderfully to the charm of the exquisite face, looking out with large pensive eyes—unforgettable eyes, the sort of eyes that the early love-poets called *ardenti stelle*, and that we moderns term 'fatal.' The oval of the face is of the purest, the ear is exquisitely delicate, the hair, parted in the middle and slightly waved, is clustered round the head which, leaning to the left, displays to perfection the wondrous line of the neck, like a proud column erected in the midst of the laces which conceal the delicate beauty of the shoulder. The hand, issuing also from a mass of lace, white as polished ivory or lucent alabaster, with slender fingers and rosy nails, aristocratic to the finger-tips, is painted with the most caressing tenderness by that sovereign brush." *

The beauty of this lady was celebrated in every part of Italy. Her own poet, Girolamo Muzio—he "with the beautiful soul"—has a stanza to those unforgettable eyes:

"*. . . . . occhi belli,*
Occhi leggiadri, occhi amorosi e cari,
Et a me . . .
Più che la vita cari e più che l'alma."

---

* G. Biagi. *Un' Etèra Romana.*

Thus, then, she looked — the courtesan whose book upon Platonic Love had "a wide and excellent influence."

Platonic Love! The subject was always cropping up, just as it crops up among ourselves. But in Tullia's salon, they did at least know what they were talking about. The thing which masquerades as Platonic Friendship with us is different indeed from what Plato meant by love — for love was what he called it, and never friendship. Comradeship was far from being an ideal of this intercourse between men and women. On the contrary, it was all reverence and devotion; the woman was, so to speak, more queenly than the queen. One of the lovely Platonists used to make her adorers kiss her feet. It must be added that she wore the most exquisite little diamond-encrusted slippers. Still, the posture remained exacting—and must have sometimes been, one thinks, immensely inconvenient. Nor did the Lady of the Diamond Slippers escape comment. It was said that "she went too far." . . . But how removed it all is from the *bousculade* of our Platonics!

Tullia, we may say frankly, preached in her Book of Platonic Love what she did not dream of practising. How should she? There was her birth to begin with; and she lived surrounded by an ardent côterie of brilliant and distinguished men—poets chiefly, but men of affairs as well. There were the Cardinal Ippolyto de' Medici and the great Filippo Strozzi; there were Ercole Bentivoglio, Varchi the historian, Pietro Manelli "of Florence," Arrighi (one of her most devoted slaves, who compared her to the sun and Vittoria Colonna merely to the moon), Nardi, who never would allow a light word about her; there was that dazzling and magnetic scoundrel, Pietro Aretino, the lion of Italy in his day; and, most of all, there was Girolamo Muzio, who paid her such honour in his verse "as no lady of the time had ever received from a man of letters."

In all this, she was happier than many more virtuous ladies. Around these latter, there moved for the most part what Maulde la Clavière calls "the cruel welter of humanity. A whole herd of men who had their reasons for liking the tame cat's rôle, and who certainly never thought of love unless somebody happened to mention it." And as the very essence of Platonism was to "interpret love . . . through impressions and sensibility," Tullia

was less paradoxical than she seems at first sight. It was more likely that she should be tempted to respond to her courtiers, "*autrement que par les vers*," than the other women to yield to their less dazzling intimates. But in the matter of verses, she was lavish, and very exacting too. Avid of flattery was Tullia, and not fastidious about the forms which her praise might take. "Adulation," says Teoli, in his Preface to her *Dialogo dell' Infinità dell' Amore*, "was a nectar which she could sip with enjoyment from any sort of cup—and she was never satiated, nor even satisfied." Thus, when the devoted Muzio once "showed symptoms of hoarseness (!), she pricked him up with a poem"—a reproachful, almost tearful poem; but Teoli does not tell us whether Girolamo was ready with an answer. He was, at all events, clearly not of jealous disposition, for in his Eclogue *Tirrenia*, he says, speaking of his love (the lady stood for Tullia), that every shepherd who knows the exquisite nymph not only loves her himself, but desires that all the other shepherds should do the same.

"The Cardinal's purple united to the saffron veil of the courtesan!" exclaims Teoli, in a coloured phrase which seems to set vividly before us the radiant creature—her exquisite toilets, her eyes, her enchanting manners; her singing and her playing upon divers instruments. Truly, a Queen of Courtesans, proud too of her literary glory (which was in those days a little unconventional of her), greedy of flattery, but generous in giving as good as she got—"*Illustrissimo*," "*Nobilissimo*," "*Osservantissima*" . . . all the compliments swarm at her pen's point. No wonder that a Pasquinade got written: *Passione d'amor di maestro Pasquino per la partita della Signora Tullia*, with its hint at the martyrdom in Rome, and the felicity in Bologna, whither she was going for a while!

Moreover, this frequentation of the salon of a cultured woman of her class was no new thing. Men had felt, in older societies than this, the need of intercourse with women more deeply versed in life than was the average fine-lady. In Greece and Rome it had been so; now Ferrara and Bologna and modern Rome were following suit. These courtesans formed a clique; admission to their circle was not easy; their salons were distinguished,

delightful, and perfectly decorous; they were, in fact, "absolutely indistinguishable from virtuous women, except that their manners were a trifle more correct."

Another reason for this ascendency was that there were very few great ladies in Rome. Women were not allowed to stay at Court, since "Court" was the Vatican. All the world has heard the exclamation of the illustrious Bernardo Domizio da Bibbiena, that Admirable Crichton of prelates, the intimate friend of Leo X., and author of a sensationally successful drama written in imitation of Plautus, and called *Calandra*. This Bibbiena, hearing a rumour that Philiberta of Savoy, the half-sister of Leo, might possibly be coming to live at Court, uttered a great sighing sound of exultation. "God be praised!" he said. "All we lack is a Court with women in it." But Philiberta did not come, or if she did, she was not allowed to stay. . . . And so, in the dearth of great hostesses, it was to the women of pleasure that the brilliant men turned for solace.

Conversation was the social virtue of the time, and conversation in the true sense being impossible without women, these ladies filled a niche that was unendurable when empty, and filled it to perfection—Tullia, apparently, best of all. When she was about twenty-seven, she went to Ferrara for a time; and a contemporary letter, dated June 13, 1537, gives an enthusiastic description of her. It was written to Isabella d'Este, "*la prima donna del mondo*," by a correspondent signing himself—one hopes not too fatuously—"Apollo." Apollo tells Isabella in glowing language all about the pretty lady who has come upon the town and is turning the men's heads. "So staid she is in deportment," he says, "so fascinating in manner, that we cannot help finding in her something divine. . . . Her conversation has matchless charm; she knows everything, and there is nothing you cannot talk to her about. No one here can hold a candle to her, not even Vittoria Colonna." Again the juxtaposition! Arrighi had not been able to compare Tullia to the sun without assigning the moon to Vittoria Colonna; Apollo also has his fling at the faultless lady. Apparently it was inevitable: think of Tullia, and you thought of Vittoria.

Beautiful and witty as our sumptuous Tullia was, it was not

for these charms only that she was adored. She had all the frankness, the vividity, which are the more delightful marks of her type ; and she had, besides, the inestimable advantage of knowing human nature to the core. In a word, she was disillusioned ; she had learnt the great secret of happiness here below—not to demand too much. And yet she had a superb faith in the ultimate power, the ultimate triumph, of love—love as a motive-force, love as "the magnificent, the admirable madness which alone produces great enterprises:" that faith which, like the wide free way of her, belongs also to the best of her type: the Romantic, the Adventurer. . . . Adventurer, not Adventuress! Tullia was as far as the impeccable Vittoria herself from being Adventuress. Maulde la Clavière, in his sympathetic mention of her, says that "if she continued to live the life to which she was born, she brought to it a contempt of money which was in itself a purifying virtue." She was immensely proud, too, of her illustrious descent, as were many of the great courtesans.

In this influence of theirs we perceive the amazing paradox of Platonism. That the virginity of the heart survives those ordeals of the flesh in which the heart has had no concern, is one of its cardinal doctrines: the heart's virginity is the true virginity. It was a counsel of perfection, yet it opened a wide field—! And in the "cruel welter of humanity around women," one supposes that even the Tullias came by some scars, and turned from sordid reality to dreams.

One pictures her, for example, free from her liaison with the great Filippo Strozzi, resuming her evenings in the salon at Rome, turning back to her poets, who followed her about with sonnets and canzones like "hungry greyhounds" (Zilioli is responsible for the phrase!), and to the historian Varchi, that learned and cultured Florentine, from whom chiefly she acquired her fine style and her distinguished language. . . . Yet Filippo Strozzi was a big personality in his own way. Banker, politician, literary amateur, and man of pleasure was he—notorious in the last-named rôle, which he knew how to combine with the most admirable attention to business. He would write a letter—a despatch, more justly, since it occupies sixty-four lines of small print, and he would scribble gaily at the end of it, "Written in

much haste, and with Tullia by my side." The business was of the highest importance; Tullia no doubt was interested in it—she would hardly else have permitted such prolonged neglect? Merely to have permitted it, however, indicates the closest intimacy: such are the extremes by which women reveal themselves to posterity. . . . The end of the *affaire* Strozzi was drawing near, nevertheless; for it was hardly more than a month before another letter was written, in which the gentleman had nothing prettier to say than that he would no more make a fool of himself about Tullia than about any other woman. "Women's society he cannot live without;" and that being so, he finds her company more amusing than that of others. "She is not beautiful," he adds—how lyingly, we know. . . . One hopes that Strozzi soon had to do without that amusing company; and it is a momentary joy to find that the famous *Dialogo dell' Infinità dell' Amore* is dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici, himself a low-minded, dissolute, and cruel tyrant, but at any rate the determined and deadly enemy of Filippo Strozzi, who put himself to death sooner than remain under the power of this man—to whom, alas! Tullia wrote a sonnet of the most eulogistic description, beginning *Almo Pastor!* (Language apparently then fulfilled the ideal of Talleyrand.) The sonnet in question was written only two years after Strozzi's death.

"It is better to be loved than to love," says our Platonist in her famous Dialogue; and her reason for this was that "in being loved, we are exerting influence, while in loving, we are merely passive agents of the motive force." The argument sets one's brain awhirl, somehow; and, sure enough, the carrying out of its teaching by the women was not conspicuously successful. They were caught, as women are apt to be caught, in their own traps: the parts were all too soon reversed, for instead of receiving love, the ladies gave it. The men? Well, the men were the immemorial ingrates; and then the women, failing by one means, tried another. Since the fire, in Meredith's phrase, was dying in the grate, they would look for kinship with the stars—they would have a *Dialogo dell' Infinità dell' Amore!*

This Dialogue, Tullia's most famous work, was of her later age. Girolamo Muzio must have been in his full influence then—for he had it printed without her consent, and not only that, but he even altered it in a very important particular. She had introduced herself, as one of the "disputants," under a feigned name; but Varchi and the poet Benucci (another intimate) were figured in their own. Muzio, evidently a delicate critic, considered that, for dear symmetry's sake, Tullia also must yield her anonymity —and sent the manuscript with this correction to the printer! He was justified of his daring; no doubt he knew his lady's weak point, that fancy for "nectar out of any cup"—and Varchi and Benucci are most generous libationers!

The thing is, to our modern notions, a monstrously tedious piece; but that was far from being the contemporary opinion. Crescimbeni speaks of it with enthusiasm; the more critical Mazzuchelli, with approval; and it was read and quoted by all the intellectual world of Rome and Ferrara. At the British Museum, a little charming crimson volume enshrines it, along with other tracts published in a *Biblioteca Rara*, which has an amusing resemblance to our latter-day reprints. The preface —then, it would seem, as inevitable as now—has a quaint device of only half-printed pages. There is a subtle modesty in this arrangement which is very Italian. "These are but notes," the preface seems modestly to plead in excuse for itself—a very proper attitude. But the author of it, one Carlo Teoli, has a saying which would vindicate any preface. Speaking of Muzio's poetry, he observes: "It loses enormously by comparison with the prose of Zilioli, *so true is it that the least eloquent of mortals is the happy lover*"!

Muzio was happy; but the fire was dying in Tullia's grate. Not long afterwards, she finally abandoned her Rome, her Ferrara, and went under the protection of the Duchess Leonora of Toledo, a virtuous and cultured patroness of literature, to live in Florence. "She was growing old," says Zilioli, with his merciless, gentle gravity. At any rate, she was growing cold. It was at this time that she wrote her poem (adapted from the Spanish, she said; but the philologists are against her), *Il Meschino, o il Guerino*—"for young ladies." She too had a

preface; and with the true convert's touch, she sings in it a rhapsody of reading, that joy which no one can take from us, which is spoilt by no admixture of human frailty, human complexity, human falseness. . . . Stay, though! Boccaccio's *Novelle* are "villainous", (and she has read them all), Boccaccio is the serpent in the Paradise: do not on any account read Boccaccio! . . . He had his revenge. She promised in the new work a perfect propriety, an unsullied page; nothing like Boccaccio should be found in this. Mazzuchelli makes the grim comment that "she did not succeed in keeping her word," and Trollope, with that Puckish glee of his, remarks that this composition, ostensibly intended as a maiden's bedside-book, is of a nature which any member of either sex, at any age, would find extremely racy reading!

Tullia then was Tullia to the end, despite good works—she "went in" for good works at Florence—and the patronage of a great lady. But the Duchess accepted the dedication of *Il Meschino*, and indeed of all Tullia's works from that time forward, to herself.

There is a curious passage in a comedy entitled *Balia*, by the poet Razzi, where one of the characters, speaking of Tullia d'Aragona, uses a gross word of the people to describe her. . . . Two men, a young one and an older, Mentor-like friend, are talking of a woman, with regard to whom the former's opinion has apparently undergone a rapid and drastic change. He now, at any rate, declares that he has known no nobler specimen of her sex; and his friend, in the irritating manner of friends, reminds him that not long ago he had employed this untranslatable word in speaking of her. The other makes this striking reply:—

"I am not sure that many of the noblest women have not borne that name. *They talked like that about Tullia d'Aragona, for instance.*" "Is the end of love its limit?" she had asked, in the renowned *Dialogo*. With her, how plainly it was not! She lives for us now, not by the writings which were then so famous, but by the vivid and radiant personality she had, by the mistakes and the splendid faith—in a word, by her perfect femininity, which pierced through all the learning and the pedantry, and through

that license which left her still, in Razzi's and Nardi's minds at any rate, "among the noblest women."

Once, long ago, a Sophist Philosopher, called Stilpone, said bluntly to Glycæra, Queen of Tarsus and Menandras, "You corrupt our young men."

"What does that matter?" answered she, "so long as I delight them? You, O sophist, corrupt them in your own way quite as much as I do—and bore them into the bargain." That answer might have sounded in a Mayfair drawing-room—and thus the ages come together, for Tullia used to laugh at Calvin and Ochino (the renowned preaching monk), and taunt them, not unjustly, with a blind prejudiced distrust of all the joy of life. They could not distinguish, she averred, between the harmful and the harmless.

Perhaps a still closer link will seem to be forged when we add that on the 8th of January, 1543, at Siena, Tullia was married to a Ferrarese gentleman, called Silvestro dei Guicciardi. (She was then thirty-eight.) Nothing of him is known but his name: Tullia's husband was plainly—Tullia's husband! Four years later—the husband being dead—she had the most unpleasant episode of her life to go through. Duke Cosmo had, a year earlier, promulgated a sumptuary decree by which courtesans were compelled to wear the Yellow Veil. This was a head-covering with a stripe of gold in silk or some other yellow material, a finger wide, and worn in such a position that it could be seen by every one. Tullia had never dreamed that this ignominy could reach her, though some years before she had had a little trouble at Siena. But she had escaped; and now, a widow, she thought herself quite safe. In April, 1547, the blow fell. She was summoned to give reasons for disobeying the law. In her despair, she appealed to Don Pedro di Toledo, nephew of her patroness, the Duchess Eleonora. He advised her to show the Duchess all the sonnets which had been written to her by distinguished men! Clearly, he did not know what to say, and took refuge in this most inept suggestion—which, whether Tullia followed or not, she treated as inadequate; for she appealed also, in an eloquent letter, to her old friend Varchi.

"Poor lady! humiliated by her evil fortune, she did not

attempt any resistance to the laws, she did not rebel against the magistrates, as she had done at Siena—nor did she disdainfully leave the city which had treated her so ungraciously. No; she bent her head, and, weary and cast-down, implored mercy. Even in writing to Varchi, she shows how broken is her spirit: no recalling of past joys—she writes as to a kind friend and patron only. . . . The courtesan is always superstitious and a fatalist: at the first discomfiture, the first reverse of fortune, she loses heart and gives way altogether." *

But the Duchess did save her from the Yellow Veil.

She died March 14, 1556, at Parma, "having hoped that she would not live to be really old."

Fifty-one—did she think it really old, we wonder! Her valiant scorn of money had lasted, had played her an ill turn, for she died in dire destitution. "Dressed in a black serge garment, pale, her hair wound simply round her head, her great wistful eyes staring into vacancy—the courtesan lay, her body's beauty ruined by the ravages of a cruel disease. Of the renowned loveliness, there was barely a trace—only in the radiancy of the pupils, in the thinned oval of the face, in the waxen whiteness of the hands. . . . Amid the green hangings of her bed, with the white linen about her, this woman, clothed in black, stretching out upon the counterpane her unimaginably slender hands, seemed like the phantom of the sumptuous courtesan." *

Her belongings had to be sold to provide for her funeral; they realized twelve crowns and a half. She had had a son, Celio, whom she was never able to have with her; to him she left all she had to leave, except some clothes and small gifts of money, which she assigned to her two women-servants.

Muzio survived her by ten years. We must suppose, therefore, that love had not been "infinite"—that she never realized the Dream of the Dialogue. He was fickle, Crescimbeni and Biagi seem to hint. . . . And she? Perhaps she never loved at all; perhaps she was, as her latest biographer describes her, "content to be loved and courted without taking things too seriously; the graces of her spirit vanquished those of her heart."

* G. Biagi. *Un' Etèra Romana.*

She gave instructions that she was to be buried beside her mother in the Church of Sant' Agostino—her mother, the beautiful, the sumptuous, the shameless "Giulia of Ferrara." . . . How one likes to know it of the beautiful daughter, the daughter with the unforgettable eyes!

NINON DE LENCLOS

1620–1705

"SHE did just what she liked."

The valiant lady! If only her chroniclers would not enjoin upon us an awful reverence, we think we could be very much at ease with Ninon de Lenclos. But one is positively frightened off. "She was a problem even for her own time." "One must be a philosopher to appreciate her fully." "No writer could render such a character"—what adulation is implicit in all this! It is at the risk almost of life that one may criticise her, or presume to think that one understands her. The truth is that here we have another proof of male arrogance. Every one of these reverential gazers is a man—and it is amusing to find, as we read, that all that was admirable in her was attributed in her own day to that famous declaration of hers: "I saw, as soon as I began to reflect, that our sex has been burdened with all that is frivolous, and that men have reserved to themselves the right to the essential things and qualities. From that moment, I resolved to make myself a man." "She did it, and did it well," remarks a "confessing" Comte de Something. . . . It will be interesting to examine the process, and all that resulted from it.

She was born in early November, 1620, and was an only child. Her parents were singularly contrasted in character. The father was "voluptuous and addicted to the pleasures of the table" . . . not only of the table, one may conjecture. He was an exquisite player on the lute, and this lovely talent he transmitted to his daughter Anne—otherwise "Ninon," the irrelevant French diminutive of that austere name. Her mother

was Marie-Barbe de la Marche, uninteresting, plain, devout, and retiring. How came Lenclos to marry her? We may safely guess that she was a neglected wife. The father it was who lived again in the daughter. Each loved her, but the mother entirely failed to influence her. That is often the case—fathers and daughters have the closer affinity; and Lenclos was, so to speak, her born father. Madame Lenclos tried her best, but she overdid piety; she forced the child to read good books, to go to church—and already at thirteen Ninon was blaspheming brilliantly. She shocked her circle in Passion-Week by a cynical quotation from a popular Spanish song of the moment; Madame called in a Jesuit to lecture her. After listening attentively, the culprit airily remarked that religion was all imagination—not a word of it was true. . . . From this position she never retreated: in later years she went, indeed, much farther. "A person who needs the help of religion to get through life is much to be pitied: it is a certain sign either of lacking intelligence or a very corrupt heart." Well! it was the fashion to be sceptical, and "Ninon was always in the fashion, though she *was* so different from everybody else," says the Abbé de Châteauneuf.

Lenclos fled from France in 1631, after having murdered a Baron de Chabans; but he had stamped himself indelibly, before he went, on his eleven-year-old daughter, as the Passion-Week of 1633 was to prove. She was precocious, and of course naughty: she had read Montaigne at ten; she danced sarabands, played the lute, liked men's compliments and was bored by the caresses of women—in that resembling many a forward damsel of her age. At fifteen, however, she took a big step in advance—at fifteen, she had a lover: Saint-Étienne, a captain of *chevau-légers*, head over ears in debt. A rascal too—and worse, for when he found that Cardinal Richelieu was interested in the young lady, he was quite ready to act as go-between. It is to Voltaire that we owe the tale of Ninon's love-affair with Richelieu—"he was her first lover, and she was probably his last mistress." This would seem to dispose of Saint-Étienne's claim to open the long list.

It is so long as totally to lack interest. When Lenclos came home in 1641, to die, his daughter was already "launched" to

such an extent that she had (according to that disgraceful writer of *historiettes*, Tallemant des Réaux) "three classes of adorers: the 'payers,' whom she cared nothing for and only made use of till she could do without them; the 'martyrs,' and the 'favourites.'" . . . Lenclos was satisfied with the effect of his early training, and on his death-bed he enforced it further. "Be scrupulous," he said, "only in the *choice* of your pleasures—never mind about the *number*." To the fastidious mind, this counsel has an Hibernian air—quantity and quality being the irreconcilable rivals they are; but Ninon's faithful chroniclers duly declare that she followed her father's advice to the letter. It was after reflecting on these edifying last words that she came to her famous decision to make herself a man. Without prejudice in favour of men or women, we may hint that perhaps Ninon did not clearly perceive the finer attributes of either. But the tribute to male vanity offered by her career has never been exceeded: we must not blame the dazzled gentlemen.

At twenty-three, she was entirely her own mistress: both her father and mother were dead. Her fortune was small, but she managed it so well that she soon had a comfortable yearly income, of which she always kept back a part so as to be able to help friends in distress. "Her love of liberty forbade her to think of marriage." . . . And thus—*femme émancipée*, if ever there was one!—Mademoiselle Anne, *dite* Ninon, de Lenclos began her independent career.

"She was never a beauty," blurts out Tallemant—and we gasp. Is not her name the very synonym for beauty? has it not been attached to every tool of factitious loveliness—is there not Ninon Bloom, Ninon Cream, Ninon Powder! But another writer confirms Tallemant, and this is Somaize, the author of the *Dictionnaire des Précieuses*, who immortalised her therein as Nigdalie, or Ligdonise—a choice of evils in *soubriquets*. "Her mind was more attractive than her face," he says. The truth is, of course, that she had fascination—that self-made beauty, as it were, which lives for ever, as her legend lives, which goes beyond mere facial loveliness, even when they go together. A frank,

tender, touching face, an arresting voice, eyes wherein "*la décence et la volupté se disputaient l'empire*"; a dazzling skin, a faultless figure, grace in every movement. . . . It seems enough! But it is true that the pictures of her give no impression of loveliness. How very little, if Ninon lacked it, would it seem to signify. "We know," says Somaize, "that she had enough good looks to inspire love."

The word is written! Love—the feeling she so deeply disdained. "Do you know why love is dangerous? Because people will persist in thinking it sublime"—so she is fabled to have written to the young Marquis de Sévigné, whose father had also been her lover. These letters are probably apocryphal, but in their perpetual gibing at any serious view of love they reflect the core of her philosophy. She considered it a transitory state, founded on an illusion of the senses. "Experience teaches us that all the *big words* are the merest illusions." "Love is a passion, not a virtue: and a passion does not turn into a virtue because it happens to last—it merely becomes a longer passion." "Love is powerful only because we are feeble." "It is almost always the work of vanity—scarcely ever of a so-called invincible sympathy." "Flight, time, absence: these are remedies which no passion has ever been known to resist." In such a strain, Ninon could talk or write for ever. *Illusion*: she was apparently content with that illusive word, which begs every question it touches, since Reality is its faithful double. She had plenty of experience, at any rate, of the "transitory state."

> "Tendre et friponne tour à tour,
> Ninon eut trop d'amants pour connaître l'amour."

So some one wrote for her epitaph. . . . Let us choose one or two incidents from the interminable list. When she was twenty-eight, she had three lovers in one year, among them a Cardinal and a Huguenot. Then came the elder Marquis de Sévigné, with whom her affair lasted three months. She was elated by her constancy, and wrote to the next one: "I think I may love you for three months, and that's an eternity for me." She liked to choose for herself, and she specially liked to be the first to break off, so when one D'Andelot picked up the handkerchief, behaved

NINON DE LENCLOS

From an Old Print

gallantly for a while, and then had the effrontery to disappear, she was very angry and complained of it to a friend, who brought back the temerarious fugitive to her feet. A curious creature called Miossens came next—clever, but so affected and involved in speech that a lady who had resisted him for so long that he had retired in despair, said when she heard of his defection: "What a pity! I was just beginning to understand him." To Miossens succeeded the great Condé—a god in war, but a bad lover. No doubt he inspired her to her famous maxim: "It requires infinitely more genius to make love than to command armies." Fortunately for Condé's feelings, Ninon fell dangerously ill, which cut short their affair without wounding explanations. "She convalesced in the company of the Chevalier de Jarzay." The Duc de Navailles, next on the list, was rather a failure. She saw him one day when she was driving, and sent to say she would like to speak to him. He hurried up, and she swept him off in her carriage to supper. He was then conducted to a charming guest-chamber by the hostess herself. She retired, and, over-excited perhaps by the intoxicating adventure, Navailles fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. Poor man! he never knew that his hostess had returned, until his door was opened noisily next morning and she appeared, dressed in his clothes. "Ah, sir!" he cried, still half-asleep, "I am a man of honour, I will give you satisfaction." . . . One conjectures that Navailles left that day.

Fourreau and Moreau, also on the list, make an amusing couple. They were "payers." Fourreau was undeviating in his attention to duty: "*Fourreau payera.*" Moreau was less dependable. He paid sometimes, but one could not always be certain: Fourreau then stepped in. This does not chime with the disinterestedness which some writers claim for her—"she never had an interested love-affair"; but it does confirm her own declaration to Fontenelle in later years: "You know what I have done with my body. Well, I could have sold my soul still more profitably—the Jesuits and the Jansenists both wanted it." Yet she would rarely accept any present from her lovers: "a man had to be very adroit, or she had to be very much in love, to make her take a present of any kind." She was quite honest, too, in her dealings with her

adorers. When she was tired of them, she said so; but while her fancy lasted, "no one saw her but the favoured man—except at supper, where people went for conversation." Sceptical old Des Yveteaux—*le dernier homme*, so called because he lived at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—was a particular favourite. He died to the music of a saraband, "so that my soul may go happily," and clasped in his rigid fingers they found a yellow ribbon which she had given him. . . . Des Yveteaux makes a definite impression: one would like to have known him. Charleval, a poet, was one of the "martyrs." "The Muses," said Scarron, brilliant crippled host of the Hotel for the Impecunious, "evidently fed Charleval on blancmange and chicken-broth." He sighed in vain, and resigned himself at last to friendship.

When Ninon was thirty-two, she began an affair with the Marquis de Villarceaux, which created consternation among her little band, for it lasted three years. She actually left Paris for his sake, and went to live with him near Yvetot. Saint-Evrémond was appalled. He wrote her a long rhymed letter, representing the futility of this kind of thing.

> "Car s'attacher toujours au même bien,
> C'est possèder et ne sentir plus rien.
> Ainsi, Philis, il faut être inconstante . . .
> Être inconstante aussi longtemps qu'on peut,
> Car un temps vient que ne l'est pas qui veut."

She was frightened; she came back—but Villarceaux came back too, and set up house opposite her dwelling. He proved troublesome—used to watch her windows, and once, seeing them lit up very late, sent to ask if she was ill. They told him no. "Then she must be writing to a lover," he decided, and went across to see; but so unstrung was he at the thought that he took up, instead of his hat, a silver ewer, crammed it on his head, and had great difficulty in extricating himself. . . . He lived, poor fellow! in such a distracting tide of jealousy that at last he fell ill. Ninon, hearing this one morning as she was having her beautiful hair dressed, was remorseful: she cut off one side of the rich *chevelure* and sent it to him, to show that she was leading and would lead for some time a retired life. He recognized all the passion there

was in this tribute, and got well at once. "She went to him, and stayed a week."

While she had been in retreat with Villarceaux, Scarron had got married. His bride was Françoise d'Aubigné, who afterwards became the portentous Madame de Maintenon. She was then seventeen—an age at which it is impossible to imagine that incarnation of Forty-Five. Ninon thought her clever, but "too gauche for a love-affair." Villarceaux (forgetting the ravished hair) did not agree in this. He tried, at any rate. Our further information comes from Ninon herself, in a letter to Saint-Evrémond, who wrote from England to ask if the gossip was true. "All I know," wrote Ninon airily, "is that I have often lent them my yellow room." She was certainly consistent: her disdain for the "transitory state" pierces plainly through this incident, for she became the intimate friend of Madame Scarron. "They slept together for several months in succession, which was then the fashion in friendship; but what was less general was the fact that they both had the same lover and did not quarrel over it." Something too much of philosophy in this, perhaps; the lesser intellects sigh for a more human note—especially as Villarceaux was the father of a son, who was afterwards legitimised as the Chevalier de la Boissière. He became an impassioned amateur of music, and used to give exquisite chamber-concerts, thus keeping alive one tradition of his many-sided mother.

As we are speaking of sons, we shall touch briefly here on the one horror which invaded Ninon's sybarite existence. In 1672 (when she was over fifty) a young man, known as the Chevalier de Villars, began to attend her house, and was received there as a distant relation. One day, he caught from Ninon's eyes an unexpected gleam of tenderness. It lit the spark; he fell in love, tried to hide his passion—but at last it broke bounds. And she was cruel—she who was so seldom cruel!—and he had caught that tender look.... He grew desperate. Ninon knew not what to do. At last she went to the Chevalier de Jarzay.* "Let me tell him who he is!" Jarzay, overwhelmed, instantly gave permission. In a terrible scene, she told the young man

* An anonymous writer of 1786 affirms this to have been Lord Jersey "of England," whose family-name is Villiers.

the truth: "You are my son." He rushed out and shot himself in the thicket behind her house.

In 1651, she had some slight annoyance from the clergy. A dinner-party during Passion-Week, in the Rue des Saints-Pères, made almost as great a scandal as one given by an equally impious host, one Desbarreaux, on a Good Friday. Desbarreaux' feast was interrupted by a terrific thunderstorm just as a delicious bacon-omelette was being served. He went to the window, opened it, and threw out the dish, saying with a yawn: "Good Heavens! what a fuss about an omelette!" Ninon's guests fell far short of this brilliancy. They merely flung out a chicken-bone—which hit a passing priest on the head. He was insulted and horrified: "Bones in Lent—there should be none to throw about," and went to the authorities with his complaint. Ninon barely escaped a forced retirement to a convent.

But some years afterwards the clergy attacked her again, and they were supported this time by the Maréchale de Grammont, whose husband said of her that she could give Beelzebub fifteen points and a bisque. Ninon was conveyed to the Madelonnettes, which was instantly besieged by her lovers, headed by Boisrobert —of whom it was reported that "his chasuble was made of one of her petticoats." The scandal was enormous, and the lady was transferred to Lagny, whither the troop followed her and stayed at an hotel near by. What might have happened if Queen Christina of Sweden had not been in France just then, one knows not. That eccentric and delightful person went to see "the illustrious Ninon," and was so enchanted with her that she regained her her liberty. Christina then proposed to carry her off to Sweden, but Ninon refused: "she was too fond of her freedom." The Queen was not offended; she went off saying that she had found no lady in France to be compared with her. It was to Christina that Ninon made her renowned bon-mot upon the Précieuses, that "they were the Jansenists of Love."

"A love-affair," said this clear-sighted lady, "is, of all dramas,

that in which the entr'actes are longest, and the acts shortest: how *can* these intervals be filled up, except by one's talents?" She therefore advised all women to cultivate their talents. Better advice has never been given, and she added to it the weight of her own dazzling success. Her delightful little house in the Rue des Tournelles—Number Twenty-Eight—where she began to live when she was forty-seven, was filled with the flower of the Parisian world. "The most virtuous mothers were anxious for their sons to go there, for it was regarded as the centre of good society." Madame de Sévigné, whose husband and son had successively come under Ninon's spell, wrote of her to her daughter: "*Qu'elle est dédaigneuse, cette Ninon!* . . . She has given your brother up—though he still goes there every day, *mais c'est un ami* . . . He was unhappy when she loved him; now he is in despair because she has ceased to do so. She says that he is beneath definition; and certainly he *is* stupid, even about himself, to say nothing of other people." Despite this unmotherly candour, the caustic lady evidently desired for Charles the friendship which "that disdainful Ninon" was now satisfied to accord him—for de Sévigné, amazing to relate, had been the loved, and not the lover! But when she gave him up as hopeless, Ninon scarified him with a phrase: "Your heart is like a gourd's heart, soaked in snow." No wonder the unhappy Charles was in despair: who could know tranquillity of mind with such a "definition" to live down!

The little house had a pretty garden; it was decorated by Mignard, Lafosse, and Lebrun; on the ground-floor there was a delightful boudoir, peopled by little Loves; on the staircase, a fine medallion of Louis XIV.; the *salon* had a magnificent ceiling representing Le Roi-Soleil as Apollo. And when these had been admired, there was the exquisite lute-playing of the hostess to enjoy—if one remembered to ask for it. But one often forgot, for "her conversation was more exquisite still." Perhaps that was why, when one *did* remember, Ninon rather put one off: no doubt she liked talking best. Music sometimes hushes more delightful things; and if she was at her best, if the supper had been brilliant, if she had been intoxicated with talking—"*ivre dès la soupe*," as they said of her—it is easy

to believe that the request for her lute might disconcert, even irritate her. But when she did play, "one would have thought she had never done anything else all her life." The expression was wonderful—"all her mind and all her soul."

She cared deeply for music: it was an inherited taste, and one, moreover, suited to her dreamy temperament. *C'est une fille fort rêveuse et qui se laisse aller à la mélancolie*, says Somaize. But it was not only music. Beauty impressed her wherever she found it, and she was catholic in her supreme good taste: the art of all ages and all countries gave her pleasure. She did not study, though. She could not take the trouble: "she never had *learnt* anything she knew"—or rather she had learnt and forgotten, and thus when vaguely it recurred to her, "she gave it such a happy turn that it seemed quite a new thing." She never quoted. That of all conversational tricks she detested most, and when Mignard, the renowned portrait-painter, deplored his daughter's terribly defective memory, Ninon consoled him with, "What a blessing for you! She'll never be able to quote." Her own talk was natural always, witty often; literature and art were her favourite topics—Molière used to consult her, "for she has the keenest sense of the absurd of any one I know"; and she was, besides, a brilliant mimic.

And so there was everything and everyone at Rue des Tournelles. Charleval, the haggard poet, could write piquant couplets like these:

> "Je ne suis plus oiseau des champs,
> Mais de ces oiseaux des Tournelles
> Qui parlent d'amour en tous temps
> Et qui plaignent les tourterelles
> De ne se baiser qu'au printemps."

But Molière and Boileau, too, could compose at her supper-table the macaronic Latin of *Le Malade Imaginaire*; La Rochefoucauld could make maxims: "The woman's hell is old age" . . . Did this alarm her? for we find Saint-Evrémond writing: "*Your* life, my very dear lady, has been too illustrious to lose any of its glory at the end. Don't be afraid of Rochefoucauld's 'hell': it's a made-up one—he just wanted to

perpetrate a maxim. You take my advice and say 'Love' boldly all the time, and never let the words 'Old Age' soil your lips."

That was another of her talents—letter-writing. Her letters were little masterpieces: Madame du Deffand said they confirmed her in an opinion she had always secretly held—that she herself was not a wit at all. They were not only witty, they were natural; and Saint-Evrémond got the best of them. He was her lifelong friend: she said once, "He and I will write the world's epitaph." This was the Saint-Evrémond who was Hortense Mancini's adorer. He was exiled to England—or rather, fled there to escape arrest—by Louis XIV.; Charles II., ever appreciative (like all fine wits) of his rivals in *bel-esprit*, admired him and gave him a pension of £300. He never returned to France. When permission was given, he proclaimed himself too old, but the truth was that he could not tear himself away from Hortense Mancini. He is an enchanting writer, a radiant Hedonist, whether he gives advice or comments on the age:—

"*Avouez toutes vos passions pour faire valoir toutes vos vertus.*" "Sinning is simply stupid—it offends good taste as much as it offends religion. A man must be a very awkward sort of rascal to get into trouble nowadays in France." Or he describes Ninon's life to her, always a successful flattery: "You have been loved by the best fellows in the world, and you have loved them just long enough to leave nothing in the way of passion untasted, and so wisely as to avoid any of the lassitudes of a waning love. None of your sex has ever before been so fortunate; there are few princesses in the world who would not envy you—probably many a saint in a convent would be glad to exchange her tranquillity of mind for your delightful anxieties. The only torments you have known are those of love—and who knows better than you that they are the best part of it!" He sings her praises as an *amoureuse*, indeed, until one wearies of the refrain: "You were born to love all your life. Lovers and gamblers have a sort of resemblance in that way: *Qui a aimé, aimera.*" "I always knew by your eyes when you had made a new conquest: they would sparkle a little more than usual,"—

crowning all by this delightful couplet, tucked in at the end of a letter—

> "L'indulgente et sage Nature
> A formé l'âme de Ninon,
> De la volupté d'Épicure,
> Et de la vertu de Caton."

But then, he was never her lover!

It was for friendship that Ninon kept all her confidence and esteem. That she did respect, calling it "a noble, liberal, and elevated passion." Small wonder—for no woman ever had such adoring friends: it was a veritable cult. The things they said, the things they wrote. . . . "All that she thought was well-thought; all that she said, well-said; all that she did, well-done." A man who met her in the latter part of her life said that "he wondered what he had done all the time he had not known her." "She suited everybody's taste without altering herself. When one has a mind like hers, one belongs to all time—one is always sure of pleasing." But Saint-Evrémond, as was his habit, said *the* thing —incomparably. "You are of all countries—as much honoured in London as in Paris. You are of all times—for when I bring your name forward to glorify my own, I find the young men quoting you to prove the superiority of theirs. So there you are, you see—mistress of the present and the past."

She was seventy-nine when she received that letter!

It was her friends who knew the real Ninon—her men-friends. Women we confess we do not feel so sure about: it is admitted by the gentlemen that she was jealous of other women. "This was her only foible," they say, apparently unconscious of its fatal discrepancy with that vaunted metamorphosis of hers. Christina of Sweden, Lady Sandwich, Madame de Maintenon (who, in the great days, preferred not to talk of her, but dared not disavow her friendship) *—these are the only women of whom we find any definite mention, and two of them were lion-hunters. Ninon stands confessed *a man's woman*—delightful but enigmatic title, surely at some variance, once more, with the Grand Decision! It may not have been entirely her fault. "*Il y a tant de femmelettes*," she would sigh, and few indeed at that time were

* "They met but seldom—only once or twice, and quite secretly."

the women who could hear her. Madame du Deffand, perhaps —but she, like Ninon, was a jealous Queen of the Drawing-room: they did not meet.

Ninon gave her own sex such things as this to digest: "I tell you, and I speak for all women, that there are moments when they would rather be *brusquées* than treated with too much respect. Men lose more conquests by their own awkwardness than by any virtue in the woman."

"Men often say that they want the 'essential qualities' in a love-affair. How miserable they would be if they got them!"

"We never talk of 'Fate' except when we've made a bad choice. How arrogant we are, to be sure! We assign to Nature all the blame for a misplaced passion, and do our own judgment all the honour of a successful one."

"A woman's virtue is only for show."

"A woman's resistance is no proof of her virtue; it is much more likely to be a proof of her experience. If we spoke sincerely, we should have to confess that our first impulse is to yield—we only resist on reflection."

These were hard sayings—or at any rate sayings that most women preferred to bandy among themselves. To think that men were being regaled with such diverting confessions at the Rue des Tournelles was not pleasant for those ladies who cherished that virtue which was "only for show," and it was annoying for those who had tardily yielded. . . . Honour amongst thieves, after all!

And then, that grand weapon for domination—the lover's quarrel. Hear her view—her exhilarating, her delightful view of that! "I sometimes took it into my head to notice what we were saying, and the way we were saying it. Directly I did so, I became possessed with an insane desire to burst out laughing. I couldn't resist it; I shook with laughter—the indecency of it! You can guess how doubly solemn *he* immediately became!" . . . No, no: these treacheries cannot be permitted, even though we too shake with laughter as we transcribe.

On ne badine pas avec l'amour? Ninon did—if we admit that she ever knew it—and *l'amour* was quite submissive. The story of the admirer whom she kept waiting to a certain day,

"because it was her eightieth birthday, and she wanted to boast of having a new lover on it," may be dismissed as apocryphal. Her old age was decorous—she declared that if any one had prophesied such a life to her at one time, she would have hanged herself. Voltaire saw her in these last years. "I can testify," he wrote, "that Mlle. Lenclos had all the ugliest signs of old age in her face, and her mind was that of an ascetic philosopher." He looked with blind eyes; he heard, one thinks (reading her last letters to Saint-Evrémond), with deaf ears. She may have been grave, even respectable, but what did the Abbé Gedoyn say of her eyes? "One can read in them, even at eighty-five, the whole history of her life." Another Abbé—Chaulieu—said more exquisitely the same thing: "Cupid had retreated into the little wrinkles round her eyes."

She had wrinkles, then? She was wise enough to permit them. "*Les rides sont les marques de la sagesse*," she said—with a thread of irony perhaps. Away, then, with Ninon Cream, Bloom, Powder! We are dealing with a great woman of the world. . . . There are two sayings for the very end. One, infinitely pathetic: "*Je suis lasse de faire toujours les mêmes choses.*" The other, a quatrain she made shortly before she died is more characteristic of her gallant Hedonism:—

> "Qu'un vain espoir ne vienne point s'offrir,
> Qui puisse ébranler mon courage;
> Je suis en âge de mourir—
> Que ferais-je ici davantage?"

What indeed? She had done just what she liked—and had never been afraid.

"Say with me a little *De Profundis* for her," wrote Voltaire. We say it—wondering what she would have thought of it! . . . Had she any speculations about that Other Future? Yes. "If one could think that one would be able to talk with all one's friends there—it would be sweet." Friendship and talking—the two real passions of her life! No mention of the "transitory state."

SOPHIE ARNOULD

1740–1802

SOPHIE ARNOULD, as she stepped on the stage of the Opera at her *début*, sang in her pathetic voice the syllables, *Charmant Amour*. The first words which they utter as professionals are the subject of deep superstition with actors; and she, whose mind was so prehensile, did not fail to observe the omen of her own beginning. "*Ça porte bonheur*," she said—and smiled as she remembered, too, that she was born upon St. Valentine's Day. Very assuredly the omens did not lie! "One of those women who, in life, are the scandal of an age—and in death, its delight," she was lovely, gifted, witty, and utterly disreputable; sharp-tongued yet not soft-hearted, foul-mouthed and assuredly not fair-souled. The only way to win her heart was to be witty or eccentric. There was a funny side to everything. If there was a serious side—and she impatiently supposed there was—it might go hang for all she cared.

It was the Valentine's Day of 1740 which saw the birth of Magdeleine-Sophie Arnould in Paris. Notice the first name: it, like her birthday and her opening song, was prophetic. She did not use it, but she never forgot that it was hers, and she celebrated her *jour de fête* on St. Magdalen's day.

Her father was a business-man in easy circumstances, who had made his comfortable fortune and was serenely satisfied with a serene little success: he would smile as he heard of "the climbers"—the cits like himself who were getting ennobled. "What have we to be ashamed of?" he would say. "We're all right as we are." He had to say that very often, for Madame Arnould kicked against the cosy pricks. She came from Blois—"that pretty little town, still redolent of Catherine de Médicis and

the Court," and once established as a Parisian, she set her cap at society. "Her mind had quick ears"—in the inimitable Goncourt phrase—"and she kept quiet and listened hard," soon turning into a delightful woman of the world. She was interested in ideas, she loved to talk; better still, she loved to listen. The talkers, the thinkers, discovered her: Voltaire was a friend, Fontenelle brought her the manuscript of one of Corneille's tragedies, Diderot and D'Alembert dined with her. . . . Honest Arnould, bored with too much brilliancy, would go off to bed; and Madame would sit till all hours talking, arguing—"*les plus belles querelles de la terre sur Dieu et le monde.*"

Sophie, the little lovely spoilt baby, youngest of five, learnt her early lessons without knowing she was learning them. At four, she could read; at seven, write better than she ever did afterwards! Seven found her also able to read music at sight. And the prettiest, gayest little creature, exquisitely, if a little too gorgeously, dressed by the adoring mother—silk frocks, necklaces, flowers in her hair. . . . "The darling!" said a Princess, a "double" one—the Princess of Modena, separated from her husband, the Prince de Conti, and bored, lonely, with nothing to do. Madame Arnould's heart fluttered. The Princess said it again—finally said something more: "Let me have her!" And Madame Arnould let her. She took Sophie about—"just like a little dog," and no little dog was ever so amusing. At ten, the lovely voice began to show itself; after her First Communion, the Princess had her seriously taught by the first professors of the day.

Then came the *coup de destin*. Sophie's patroness was devout; she frequently made retreat to her favourite convent. One Easter-Tide, arriving at Panthémont, she found the nuns in consternation: their show-vocalist had fallen ill—there was no one to sing *Tenebræ!* Madame de Conti had an inspiration: her little one should sing *Tenebræ*. The Abbess gazed in astonishment: that girl of sixteen! But had she not heard of a wonder-child at Saint-Denis, who had mingled the emotions of her First Communion with those of a musical triumph. . . . Was this the same? This was the same. And the Abbess consented. On the Wednesday of Holy Week, Sophie sang. At first she was

nervous; then she grew bolder, the pathetic voice rang out gloriously. . . . On Good Friday, "more than two hundred carriages had to be turned away from the Convent-Church." She sang the *Miserere* of Lalande, in that searching, poignant voice of hers: Paris had come, for the first time, to hear Sophie Arnould, and Paris was soon in exquisite tears—"that was the applause they gave her."

An odd beginning for a career such as hers! But destiny quickly cast aside the meretricious effect of paradox, and seized the appropriate instrument. Paris was talking, as only Paris can, of the "angel with the celestial voice": Mme. de Conti made no secret of her proud delight; and the exultation of a great lady is soon known at Court. It pierced further even than "Court," it reached, actually, the Queen! Marie-Leczinska, sick unto death of Court-existence, sad, but at least sheltered in her little world of friendship, and apprehensive of anything outside it—Marie-Leczinska ventured to be interested. What harm could come of this? She faltered, hesitated—poor experienced, inexperienced woman!—then at last, she mustered courage. Marie-Leczinska asked to see Sophie!

The Princess drove her out to Versailles in her best carriage. They arrived, were shown to the room. In came a Queen—a kind, smiling Queen. How like a fairy-tale! "She *is* pretty," said injudicious Marie-Leczinska, who never was anything but injudicious all her life. And Sophie sang bravely, and before her *bravura* was quite finished, the Queen said to the Princess, "I want her. Will you let me have her, Cousin?" and tapped her laughingly on the shoulder with the Royal fan! So far, so good; but next day, complications. Another letter asking for Sophie—a letter from the other Queen of France! Madame de Pompadour "wanted her" now. At first it seemed but another feather in the little silken cap, and Madame de Conti was excited and pleased. But etiquette had a word for her ear: the poor lady soon realized that she was between the devil and the deep sea. If she should seem to insult the Queen! If she should actually offend the Favourite! . . . What to do? She did the oddest

thing. She sent for Madame Arnould, and told her that *she* must take her daughter to *this* Queen. And—odder still!—Madame Arnould was quite ready. "She loaded Sophie with jewels," and off they set. The great mistress was just crossing her beautiful *salon*, as they entered. "How like you are! only you, Madame, have a finer bearing. Your daughter looks more romantic, more of a dare-devil, though"; and then she added mysteriously, "I am going to the King. Don't stir from this room till I come back. Don't let any one see you." Perhaps Madame Arnould had a sly smile behind the Pompadour's back for this: that foible of hers was so well known, of impressing everyone with the idea that the King was in and out of her house like a tame cat! They ventured to look round, for all the mystery—and, *mon Dieu*, what pianos! Two of them, and painted. Boucher had painted them, and we may be sure that Madame Arnould knew all about Boucher. And guitars and harps and mandolines, all glittering with gold. . . . Daring Sophie was not frightened, however; she began to play upon one of the Boucher pianos. Suddenly her ear was gently pinched. It was Madame de Pompadour again. "Well, you are born for the stage. You're certainly not nervous!" And then again Sophie sang—and it was the same success. "My dear child, you will make a charming Princess."

Madame Arnould was vexed at this. "I don't understand you, Madame. My daughter can never be a *real* Princess, and she is far too well brought up ever to become a stage one."

"*Madame de Pompadour smiled.*"

She smiled because she knew her world. Some days afterwards, Madame Arnould was informed that the Queen had appointed Sophie to be of her Private Music. That was delightful. But a few more days brought a *lettre-de-cachet* from the King, by which Sophie was appointed to *his* Music, "and particularly to his Theatre of the Opera." So there was Pompadour, and one knew how much Marie-Leczinska counted for. Madame Arnould burst into tears. She wanted her daughter to be happy, and that, on the stage, she considered difficult—at the Opera, impossible. She hurried to the Princess, and the Princess hurried to Convent after Convent, imploring the Abbesses to

SOPHIE ARNOULD

From an Old Print

hide her *protégée* until something could be arranged. But all the Abbesses refused. "One dare not offend the King."

On December 15, 1757, Sophie Arnould, seventeen years old, made her *début* at the Opera.

The great Clairon had taught her to act, Mlle. Fel to sing; and her looks, although her actual beauty was a disputed question, were all in her favour. "A frank, attractive, intellectual face"—so she said herself; and so we see, as we regard her portraits. They indeed would indicate genuine beauty: glorious, gleaming eyes are there, the eyelids exquisitely narrowed at the corners, the eyebrows sweeping like the wings of a distant flying bird. The face is a long oval, ineffably expressive: "I never saw such beautiful sorrow," said Collé, a diarist of the time. In one of her portraits—the most famous, the historic one, by La Tour (engraved by Bourgeois de La Richardière)—she is represented singing, her mouth half-open: "*cette grande bouche tourmentée*," which, according to Mme. Vigée Lebrun, spoilt her beauty. Her figure was slender and graceful; she was not tall. For other attractions, let us consult herself again: "I have a well-made leg, a pretty foot, and arms and hands good enough for a painter's model." And, best of all, she had her strangely fascinating voice. Quite a small one, yet so clear, so searching, poignant, plaintive! There was nothing it could not make you feel. "She had cries and tears and sighs and sad caresses . . . she could make her audience shiver . . . 'twas the voice of Psyche in Hades, of Agamemnon's daughter searching for the lost Achilles, of Iphigenia dragged to the altar." There was a slight huskiness sometimes, so—"It's the loveliest asthma I ever heard," said the Abbé Galiani. Because she was so witty herself, every one tried to be witty about her: Galiani, they say, hit the mark here. She lisped, too, but the seduction that may lie in a woman's lisp is incalculable, as she was aware: "it wasn't even a defect," she said coolly of her own *grasseyement*. But there *was* one—at that time—almost irremediable defect in her beauty. Her teeth were strikingly, even horribly, bad; and dentistry was then in its infancy. The coarseness of the age spared her no detestable allusion that could be made: one shudders at the uglinesses which were said and printed. . . . Her skin was very dark,

légèrement mulâtresse, say the Goncourts; but the Police-Reports did not choose their phrases so carefully. "Her skin is black and dry," said one; "black and oily," said another. The discrepancy is to some extent reassuring.

"Mother says it's going to the devil to go to the Opera. Well, then, going to the devil is my destiny." So Sophie said, and very gallantly faced her destiny! Madame Arnould did her best; she hung about the wings and frowned at the elegant gentlemen who thronged them—for in a fortnight after her *début*, Sophie was Queen of the Opera. Thursday was her night—and Thursday soon became *the* night. "I doubt if people would take anything like so much trouble to get into Heaven," said a wag. Madame Arnould had her hands full. Bouquets were thrown at the débutante's feet: "Ah, gentlemen," said the witty mother of that witty daughter, "don't strew her path with thorns!"

How many lovers? Only the Police-Reports knew. How many loves? Two—not more. . . . The lovers began before she was grown-up. Malézieux, a famous dandy, fell a victim to her when she was fifteen. He pointed out to her how Françoise d'Aubigné, fresh as the day, had married the crippled Scarron because he was witty. Our redoubtable Sophie was ready with her answer. "I'll do the same to-morrow, on the condition that my husband begins by being a witty cripple—and ends by being King!"*

But evil days had fallen upon the excellent Arnould; he had had a long illness, and at the end of that, a long bankruptcy. Now something had to be done to make money, so he took a house in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-d'Auxerrois where, calling it the Hôtel de Lisieux, he let rooms at 30 *sous* a night "to country-gentlemen visiting Paris." One of them was soon occupied by a young man called Dorval, twenty-five, handsome, aristocratic-looking, and a poet—come to Paris to study and get

* Mme. Scarron, later Mme. de Maintenon, married Louis XIV.

a play accepted. But for a young literary man, he did very little work, and had a great deal of money. His clothes were incongruous, too—brocades, lace-cuffs; and the most delicious hampers were always being sent him by his fond parents, containing game, fish, truffles, butter, wine. Gracefully he would ask Madame Arnould to "help him out with them"—an arrangement which soon ended in his coming to the family-table. And after dinner, he was simply perfect. He would play *tric-trac* with old Arnould, he would argue gloriously with Madame; best of all, he would behave so discreetly with Sophie—for of Sophie he took scarcely any notice at all. The old people were very sympathetic when one night he was attacked with a terrible headache and had to go to bed early. Dull was the evening without Dorval! The old people went off early too. . . . The Hôtel de Lisieux might have been haunted that night, there were so many light footsteps on the stairs. . . . And soon, in the street, a nervous little bird was panting against Dorval's heart, and Dorval was muttering, "Confound that lackey of mine! He has made a mistake—where's the carriage?" The carriage was found at last. "*Le reste va sans dire*": Sophie and Dorval had run away together.

"That lackey of mine"—odd phrase for a needy young scribbler! But Dorval was not Dorval at all. Two days later, that defaulting lackey brought a penitent letter, signed LOUIS, COMTE DE BRANCAS. "As soon as I am a widower, I promise and vow to marry your daughter." Could anything be fairer—from a Count? nay! a Duke to-be, for the old Duc de Lauraguais could not last long. . . . Madame Arnould was a woman of the world if she was anything: she went to see them—a little nobly sad, perhaps, but wonderfully reasonable; there were tears, kisses, and complete forgiveness.

There was another lady in the case, though—Mme. de Brancas. She too was a *bel esprit*, and though her husband was only her husband, she disliked this sort of thing. She was exquisitely malicious, she asked the most insulting questions in the sweetest voice: "What news of your actress? I've been thinking of teaching my parrot to recite Molière. . . . Oh, *she's* a singer, though." Brancas, who was very quick-tempered, flew out at his wife; and then flew out—to his mistress.

In later years, Sophie said, "M. de Lauraguais has given me two million kisses, and made me shed four million tears."

"Dorval"—soon Duc de Lauraguais—was a wonderful fellow. "*Un fou d'infiniment d'esprit*," the Goncourts call him—but, madman or not, it was impossible to be dull in his company. He knew everything, did everything, said everything. Sophie ought in justice to have reckoned the number of times he had made her laugh; for it was his wit which brought them eternally together again, after the most insulting separation-scenes, like the one which was played during his absence at Ferney, "to read a tragedy to Voltaire"—for Lauraguais could write tragedies too. She, weary of the quarrels—he was desperately jealous—took all his presents (including their two children), packed them into a carriage, and sent the whole array, carriage included, to Mme. de Lauraguais. That lady was superb. She sent back the presents and the carriage, disdainfully; as disdainfully—she kept the children. Even Sophie's laugh must have faltered before that perfect insult. . . . Lauraguais hurried back and then went nearly crazy, for already Sophie had found a fresh protector, a M. Bertin, very rich, yet unlucky in love. He had just been thrown over by another beautiful actress, and was quickly served in like fashion by this one, though he lavished unheard-of sums upon her. Bertin was deceived before he was thrown over, for Sophie had—"as women of the theatre so often do"—taken a violent fancy to an inferior: one Lacroix, her hairdresser. She used to walk about with him on Sundays, like a little milliner, radiant and elated: Lacroix was proclaimed as *l'ami de cœur*. An amusing caprice! but Lauraguais, vigilant from a distance, knew it could not last. It did not last, and not Bertin it was who killed it, but the tempestuous, indispensable Dorval himself. He and Bertin arranged matters in the most gentlemanly way—Lauraguais re-imbursed his lavish, deserted rival. Lacroix does not seem to have been entirely dismissed; for in 1774, when Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* was produced, we retrieve him. A lady of fashion, Mme. de Hunolstein, had taken a violent fancy to Sophie, and had asked her to give her a hat like one which was worn in the opera. But the hat proved unbecoming, so the lady sent it back and asked for another. The bandbox arrived

when Sophie was having her hair done. The Prince d'Hénin, a dull protector of the moment, was in her room, together with Lacroix, who was dressing her hair. She turned with a malicious puzzled frown, holding the replenished *carton* out in both hands. "Let me see—whose turn is it to run errands to-day?" . . .

Hénin was the victim of Lauraguais' most diverting practical joke. He summoned four doctors to a consultation, and most solemnly demanded of them: "Can a person die of boredom?" They, thinking it was a family-affair, and well acquainted with the strange mental condition of the House of Brancas, said with one voice that a person could, and signed a document to that effect, adding that the only remedy was to remove the cause. Armed with his paper, Lauraguais gravely went to the Police and lodged a complaint against Hénin for endangering the life of the popular actress, Mlle. Sophie Arnould. How Paris laughed —and, better still, how Sophie laughed! Hénin called Lauraguais out; but that was nothing, for had not Sophie called him in? . . . So the good hours were renewed, and no matter how troublesome he was, the good hours made up for the quarrels, for they were bound together by their scintillating wit—"'twas their wedding-ring," say the Goncourts, rivalling them in brilliancy.

Sophie was the wittiest woman of her time. A whole book (*Arnoldiana*) has been published of her sallies, quips, epigrams, "definitions of the indefinable, as if one should shoot at a ghost!" . . . There was the famous speech to the poet Bernard found one day lying under a tree alone. "What are you doing?" asked she. "I am talking to myself." "Take care, then—you are talking to a flatterer." And in another vein, more usual and more facile, her endless gibing at the "reputation" of her comrades: *l'esprit gaulois* in full blood, and untranslatable, unprintable! Again, to the friend of doubtful age, who said it was dreadful to be approaching forty: "Ah, well! never *you* mind, for every day takes you further away from it!" Or the remark to Mlle. Heinel, a dancer who made Lauraguais faithless for a period, and then married Gaetano Vestris, who in the early days had disliked her and called her *une catin*. Heinel complained of the epithet to Sophie, and Sophie said, "People are so rude nowadays: they call things by their right names." Her comrades indeed had

much to bear. There was Mlle. Guimard, another dancer (whose name still lives)—Guimard, the unimaginably thin! "When I see her dancing that *pas de trois* with the men, it reminds me of two dogs fighting for a bone." And when this "Skeleton of the Graces," who was not graceful, broke her arm: "What a pity it wasn't her leg, for then she need not have been prevented from dancing." Everything made an opportunity. She meets a doctor with a gun under his arm, going to see a patient. "Ah! I see you're afraid of missing him the *other* way." And that night at the Opera when she was announced to appear—and appeared only in a box above the stage! "What brought you there, madame?" says a stern Director; "you were said to be ill." "I thought it was a splendid opportunity for studying my understudy." But among the best, to our thinking, was the speech to the great lady who said loudly in her hearing that there ought to be a badge of honour by which decent women might be distinguished from "the creatures." "Ah, madame!" Sophie said, turning quickly, "how can you wish that? The 'creatures' could count you, *then*." In 1763, when the Opera-House was burned down and the Parisians were heartlessly saying, "What, no water ready! But who could dream that an ice-house would go on fire?"—another great lady came in for the lash. "Oh, Mlle. Arnould" (meeting her next day), "perhaps you can tell me": and she asked for particulars of "*cette* terrible incendie." "All that I can tell you, madame," said the 'terrible' Sophie, "is that *incendie* is a masculine noun."

But one might quote for ever from that "flight of wasps." The deepest note she struck was in her wonderful reply to the ubiquitous Police-Officer Sartines, sent to make inquiries after a supper which had ended with lampoons upon the great, now dying, but ever-revengeful, Pompadour. Sophie received him quite agreeably. He began:

"Where did you sup last night?"

"I forget."

"You supped at home, madame."

"Very possibly."

"You had company."

"I often do."

"Persons of high rank."

"That happens sometimes also."

"Who were they?"

"I forget."

"But it seems to me that a woman like you would probably remember things of that sort."

"Yes; *but before a man like you, I am not a woman like me.*"

The great Mesmer was electrifying Paris just then; and, Sophie's little dog falling ill, she insisted on consulting him instead of the fashionable veterinary surgeon, Lionnois. The adored little dog was returned to her with a clean bill of health from Mesmer, but within a week from that day, it died. "Well, *I* have nothing to reproach myself with: the poor little animal died in perfect health."

Paris was at her feet for twenty years. She did what she liked, said what she liked, *was* what she liked—and Paris (and the Directors of the Opera) bore it all. Belanger, the rising young architect of the day, drew up the plans for a magnificent house in the Chaussée-d'Antin, which was to be finer even than the frail Guimard's! (The plans still exist, in the Bibliothèque Nationale; but it was never built.) Belanger was the only other man whom she seriously cared for. He was gay, clever, youthful with the exhilarating youthfulness of the artist, and a wit of course—for she could not love without that lure. And then he was of her own station, and he was utterly grateful for her love. He, like Lauraguais, always came back, and always with a jest or a practical joke. So long did it last that people said they must be married. It was not Belanger's fault that they were not, and Sophie used to let the gossip pass; once, indeed, when twitted with having thrown herself away on a mere *bourgeois*, she answered, "Well, so many stones are cast at me that I thought an architect would be the best person to make use of them."

The gay life! Wit and fame and beauty, delightful suppers, perfect cooking, perfect talking—intellectual, when she wanted that vein, inexpressibly obscene, when she wanted *that* one; triumphs at the Opera—Gluck, "the musician of the soul" (as she called him), appearing just in time to give her fresh *éclat*

when her earlier parts were getting too familiar, and she was getting tired of them herself. Rameau had been the composer until Gluck came; her greatest part had been Zélaïre, in his *Castor et Pollux*. Garrick saw her in it, and thought Clairon far inferior to her as an actress. Nevertheless, Sophie was weary of Zélaïre; she was getting careless—she under-acted, under-sang; the management grew angry. It threatened a bad hour—when in 1774 Gluck appeared, and Paris was at Sophie's feet again, for she sang and acted *Iphigénie en Aulide* as even she had never sung or acted before. The *Iphigénie* was epoch-making. Gluck had found his singer, and Sophie her composer. But alas, that sorry chain of Court-intrigue! Marie-Antoinette was Gluck's patroness; Mercy-Argenteau was the Austrian Ambassador; Rosalie Levasseur, Sophie's one rival, was Mercy's mistress . . . and, to complicate matters further, the Prince d'Hénin, then Sophie's protector, took it into his stupid head to be rude to Gluck. After a quarrel at her house, Gluck left it, saying he would never return—and he never did. When *Alceste* was produced in 1778, Rosalie was given the principal part. It was the beginning of the end, and Sophie knew it. She shot one arrow. "Rosalie ought to have the part: she has the *voice of the people*"—for Levasseur's voice was coarse and harsh. Rosalie retorted with a filthy lampoon; there were cabals, cliques, friendly and unfriendly articles—and the strangest consequence of all was that the incomparable Iphigénie of the first Gluck-production was now spoken of as the champion of the anti-Gluck School!

It *was*, practically, the very end. She had one more great success—in a little opera of the "old school," *Euthyme et Lyris*, played twenty-six times, amid tumult of the Gluck-party; then her star fell quite from Heaven, and she heard her dismissal from a hundred hateful throats when she sang the line:

"*Vous brûlez que je sois partie!*"

—in her great part of *Iphigénie!*—and the whole house reeled with brutal mocking applause.

In that moment, Sophie Arnould expiated all her errors. Imagination refuses to dwell on what such things must mean to

those who endure them. Even *her* gallant humour must have failed her. . . . She retired definitely in 1778. For a little while her salon cheered her; everyone came there—even Voltaire himself, who arrived one day in doleful mood, saying that "he was eighty-four years old and had done eighty-four foolish things." "Dear me!" cried she, "what's that? I'm not forty yet, and I've done more than a thousand!" One fears that Voltaire, himself a wit, may not have relished such too-brilliant consolation.

But in reality, from 1777 to her death, it was all downhill. From riches to poverty—poverty to penury—penury to starvation—starvation to an unknown grave. She was badly in debt, her voice was gone, her lovers were gone too. She gave up her house in Paris and went to live in the country—first at Clichy, then at Luzarches, where she bought an old, almost ruined Priory, and (still witty!) inscribed over the doorway: "*Ite, missa est*"—the words of dismissal from Mass. There she planted cabbages and fried them for her dinner, kept cocks and hens, turkeys, pigs, rabbits, and pigeons—until these last proved too expensive to feed. She looked after her garden, cut her own wood, and enjoyed herself: "not one moment's *ennui*," she wrote. But even these mild joys were too good to last. The pigeons had grown too expensive; soon almost everything grew too expensive. The nine years from 1793 to 1802 were terrible—would have been unbearable if she had not still kept Belanger and Lauraguais as friends. To Belanger especially she wrote. He was married now, but she was still dear to him for old times' sake, and the "poor fairy" acquiesced in that humble relationship, calling him My true friend, My good angel. . . . But, "What *are* we . . . to grow old?" she broke out once; and then summoned again the old hardihood: "Never mind! At the end of the ditch, the fall."

Lauraguais she never forgot—to Lauraguais, despoiled by the Revolution and now almost as poor as herself, she used even still the tone of tenderness. In 1798 he wrote and asked "dear old Sophie" to come and share his country retreat at Manicamp. She did not go, but when in 1800 she went to live in Paris again, at the Hôtel d'Angivilliers, she in her turn invited

"Dorval" to come to her. "You will have to do without much attendance, for I have only one old servant, but what will that matter? *I* will do everything you want," and she quoted fondly from some sentimental poet:

"Ah! qu'on est heureux de déchausser ce qu'on aime!"

Lauraguais refused her offer, but he frequently visited her, and they talked over the old days together. He could not help her much, neither could Belanger; she suffered terrible privations. She was ill; then she had a fall—it brought on a dangerous tumour, and, so reduced as she was, that killed her. She had to face "the hideous creature called Death": her priest came to help her. It was in 1802, the year that saw the deaths of Clairon and Dumesnil.

Sophie Arnould's last words? Her name was Magdalen, as we remember; and she murmured ". . . *quia multum amavit*," with her eyes—they kept all their loveliness—smiling into the priestly face. Then, as she confessed further, and the tale of "Dorval's" jealousies, caprices, violences, came to be told, the *curé* cried compassionately:

"My daughter, what evil days you have lived through indeed!"

And she made the supreme, the immortal epigram of all her brilliant life.

"*Ah, les beaux jours!*" murmured dying Sophie Arnould, "*ah, les beaux jours! J'étais si malheureuse!*"

JEANNE DU BARRY

1743–1793

WHEN Louis XV. of France fell in love with Mademoiselle Jeanne Vaubarnier, he said, with an affectation of carelessness, to the witty Duc d'Ayen, "Is it true that I have, as they say, succeeded to Sainte-Foy?"

"Sire," answered D'Ayen, "Your Majesty has succeeded to Sainte-Foy, as you have succeeded to Pharamond."

Louis did not even know her real name. She was passing as Mademoiselle Vaubarnier when he saw her first, and that was her third *nom de guerre*. . . . From the maze of falsehood which surrounds her now, and surrounded her then, it has been the thirty-years' work of one writer—M. Charles Vatel—to extricate the truth. In his monumental three volumes we have all that is known of her—documents innumerable, birth, marriage, and death certificates, not only hers, but those of almost every one she knew! Yet from our awed perusal we rise with the feeling that we understand her little better than we did before, so true it is that mere facts are uninterpretative of character.

To understand her we must turn to the short study by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. Errors abound there, but the seeing eye atones for all. Jeanne Du Barry, "the best-treated kept-woman in the kingdom," with her easy virtue and her easy virtues, her lavish generosity and her more than lavish self-indulgence, with her good-humour, her frivolity, her impudence, and her incomparable loveliness—Jeanne Du Barry lives there, breathes there, as she does in no other of the many memoirs of this last Queen of the Left Hand, "who became an historic personage by accident, one might almost say—by mistake."

Her real name was Jeanne Bécu, daughter of Anne Bécu, sempstress, and of a father unknown to this day. Her maternal grandfather, Fabien Bécu, had been a roasting-cook at Paris, under Louis XIV. He was remarkably good-looking: a Countess had fallen in love with him and married him. She quickly died, and handsome Bécu quickly consoled himself. He married this time a fellow-servant, Jeanne Husson; she bore him seven children, of whom Anne was one. This daughter inherited her father's attractions. Calling herself a sempstress, she lived "in a style which indicated other ways and means than the needle"; and on the 19th of August, 1743, the little unfathered daughter was born at Vaucouleurs—a small, ineffably dreary place, "five long leagues from Domrémy," says Vatel, thus demolishing Carlyle's glittering, long-accepted paradox of "Joan of Arc's country."

Between 1747 and 1749, Anne Bécu moved to Paris. There she married a "domestic," Nicolas Rançon by name, and herself went out as a cook. "Why," asks Vatel, "did not Choiseul use this weapon of Jeanne's low origin (easily-proved) against her, instead of the campaign of calumny? The horde of cooks, valets, liveried folk . . . who could use the 'thee-and-thou' to her, address her as uncle addresses niece, and cousin cousin!" Choiseul needed only to unmask the crew; instead, he slandered the King's mistress. "Stout Choiseul went his way unheeding," says Carlyle; but Carlyle took his information from Besenval, Choiseul's friend. We shall see what the stoutness and unheeding course were worth, and in what they resulted.

Jeanne, at six, was placed in a convent by a rich protector—no scandal about M. Billard-Dumonceaux!—who plainly had a low opinion of Anne Rançon, for the institution was designed for "those young people who are in circumstances tending to the risk of moral ruin." Jeanne was living at the time with her mother, now a married woman: the implication is clear.

The convent rule was stern. Forbidden and punished were "little delicate airs," laughter, joking, teasing; and the dress was hideous. Jeanne stayed till she was fifteen—and then the golden head emerged from black woollen veil and coarse unstarched bands, the exquisite form from shapeless hideous robe, the

"perfect little feet" from abominable yellow shoes. . . . Little Lange—as she was called—went out as lady's-maid to the widow of a rich *fermier-général.* She did not stay. For a lady's-maid she was probably both too well- and too ill-fitted. The duties would be perfunctorily done, one guesses—the *sous-entendus* of the part too visibly congenial. . . . With her next place, however, she fell into her niche. It was that of a milliner's apprentice at Labille's, a prominent modiste of the day. "Imagine the great glittering shop, where all day long, charming idlers, handsome great gentlemen, lounged and ogled; the pretty milliner tripping through the streets, her head covered by a big black *calèche,* whence her golden curls escaped, her round dainty waist defined by a linen pinafore frilled with muslin, her feet in little high-heeled, buckled shoes, and in her hand a tiny fan which she uses as she goes—and then imagine the conversations, proposals, replies!"* It is indeed not difficult to imagine all this. The scandalous anecdotists of later days found it so easy that they had energy to spare, and used it on affirming that the pretty milliner was *une fille publique.* This is utterly a lie. "*Jeanne Bécu,*" says the irrefutable Vatel, "*n'a appartenu ni à la prostitution publique, ni même à la prostitution clandestine.*" At Labille's she was simply a pretty, flighty grisette, who, in the quaint phrase of an old writer, *ne demandait pas mieux.* It was in 1761 that she definitely entered the half-world, and at a private gaming-den in Paris (kept by a reputed "Marquise" Duquesnay) met the man who was to lead her to "the heights of harlotry and rascaldom" —Jean Du Barry, called Count, a title to which his family, though noble, had no right whatever. At the time, Jeanne was known as Mademoiselle Beauvarnier. The name is still given her in encyclopædias and biographical dictionaries.

Jean Du Barry was no mere vulgar libertine, but an accomplished and perfect scoundrel. He was very clever, good-looking, witty, "with the amusing Gascon accent," and the inveterate Gascon belief that he was born to be a hero of adventures. He was liked by women—the sort of women he knew. It was said that he "covered them with gold and diamonds." Jeanne would do anything for diamonds; for diamonds she became his mistress

* MM. de Goncourt.

and decoy. Du Barry eked out the salary from a Government appointment by the profits of his card-tables, presided over by one lovely money-spinner after another, and he never had had one so lovely as this. It soon became a mark of fashion among men to have "supped *at least* with Mademoiselle Vaubarnier"—for Jeanne's choice of a name had not pleased her protector, who found it too obviously *de fantaisie*. He did not, however, rack his brains much for a fresh one: he merely altered the position of two letters—Vaubarnier replaced Beauvarnier!

Scoundrel though he was, he was an agreeable man. His house was gay, he made a perfect host; distinguished roués clustered round *The Roué*, as he had the honour to be dubbed. That "evergreen sinner" Richelieu; the Duc de Nivernais (Lord Chesterfield's pattern for his son); the Prince de Ligne and the Duc de Lauzun, as sentimental as he was vicious; the epigrammatized Sainte-Foy—all met there. The women were naturally fewer. The Comtesse La Rena, mistress of "Milord March" (afterwards England's proud possession, "Old Q"), and Mademoiselle Legrand "a sort of Ninon de Lenclos," seem to have been the only ones. At the latter's semi-literary salon, Jeanne met other types of men—Julie de l'Espinasse's Guibert, Crébillon, Collé, Favier—all with a little tag of literary fame. The pretty milliner was being *décrassée!* She soon learned ease and adroitness, outward dignity—how to behave herself, in short, when necessary. She knew already—what in the end proved even more important—how *not* to behave herself when the amusing moment arrived. She understood, in fact, her business: "she was the essential courtesan; she had all the cynicism, animation, and refinements of her trade." . . . Thus for four years she lived, quite happy: gambling, laughing, getting diamonds, laces, silk-gowns, "two dozen corsets," driving in a gilded chariot with two children, neither hers nor Du Barry's, whom she dressed beautifully—"*une femme entretenue, dans l'acception la plus étendue de ces mots.*" Yes indeed! for it was said that Du Barry permitted, even encouraged, rivals. . . . And then, in the spring of 1768, the Fairy-Tale began.

No mistress had reigned at Court since the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764. There had been many passing caprices—

the aftermath of the Parc-aux-Cerfs ; and there had been one false alarm, when Madame d'Esparbès, a Court lady, had been actually on the eve of proclamation. But the Prime Minister, Duc de Choiseul, was resolved that the new Queen of the Left Hand should be his sister, Duchesse de Grammont, or nobody. He had nipped the d'Esparbès hopes in the bud. Richelieu (already Jean Du Barry's friend) wanted a favourite who would play into his hands ; while Lebel, the rascally Royal valet, trusted things would remain as they were, for he found very solid profit in satisfying the Royal caprices. It seemed to Lebel that fate was playing as his partner when the King lost his head over a pretty nobody who had come to Versailles on an affair of business with M. de Choiseul. His Majesty, ever on the watch for prey, had caught sight of the ravishing girl ; and Lebel soon ascertained that there would be no difficulty about "arrangements." Mademoiselle Vaubarnier assuredly made no difficulty ; Du Barry, whose ambition it long had been to supply a Royal Favourite made none either. Jeanne accepted the affair light-heartedly—dazzled, no doubt, and ecstatically anticipant of diamonds, but, for anything else, as unruffled as you please. "She had the wit to affect no embarrassment, and the honesty not to deceive the King about her experience. She rejected the airs of innocence which Louis was so accustomed to—that sacrificial confusion with which even the sagest women imagined they must flatter the Royal lover. She was herself ; she treated the King as a man, and as the King *was* a man—he fell in love with her at the first interview."

The first interview was in the early spring of 1768, but nothing was known of the affair till the end of July. The Court had been in mourning : the Queen, unhappy Marie-Leczinska, had ended her blundering life on June 24th. . . . That must have been an anxious three or four months for the Du Barry *ménage !* Jeanne may have been heedless. "It would be all right, and if it wasn't—*zut alors !*" But Du Barry was of different stuff. Brilliant, ambitious, and a born intriguer, he had "that supreme contempt for humanity which makes a man believe that anything is possible, and frequently enables him to justify his belief." At a glance, he saw what the girl might do. Queen of the Left

Hand, why not? He set himself to train her, to develop in her the stuff of which favourites are made. No Parc-aux-Cerfs for Mademoiselle Vaubarnier! He fetched his clever, ugly sister, Fanchon, to Paris, and between them they tutored the goose who was to lay the golden eggs. It is a proof of their great intelligence that they recognized her natural gifts—her unblushing effrontery, her pretty impudence, her spontaneity; and left all that alone.

Moreover, Louis had found her for himself; she had not been brought to him by his go-betweens. That was an immense attraction to the worn-out, blasé King. He was not more than fifty-eight, but he had never been young. Nothing had ever amused him, nothing had ever interested him. "What would life be without coffee? What is it, *with* coffee?" . . . That was his attitude. And to this man arrives the incarnation of youth and mirth and folly in the exquisite form of Jeanne Vaubarnier! That he is King seems hardly to occur to her: he is a man—and she knows all about men. . . . The famous anecdote of the coffee-pot—how futile to deny it! If it did not happen, it was merely by mistake that it did not. The King likes to brew his own coffee, and once when he is with her, the coffee-pot boils over while he is not looking. "*Eh! La France, prends donc garde! Ton café f— le camp!*"

Untranslatable—partly in truth to most of us, unintelligible; but that very fact is convincing! La France ("as she named her Royal valet") was the name of one of her lackeys. Could she conceivably have diverted its use to the King? Many writers cry "Impossible!" To us, nothing, with what we know of her, seems more characteristic. Impudence in private was as much her pose—if the word can be applied to such spontaneity—as decorum and gentleness were in public. That combination, in the courtesan, is surely as old as story!

And then, to make it the more delightful to our *ennuyé*—ner enchanting loveliness, rare as it was exquisite. Her masses of hair, of that silver-gold which gives such sweetness and such harmony to the face; her brown arched eyebrows, brown curling eyelashes, like rays around the melting blue eyes, with that dewy gleam in them which only Greuze can depict! . . . "Then there

MADAME LA COMTESSE DU BARRY

From an Old Print

was a little Greek nose, finely chiselled, and the bent bow of a delicious tiny mouth. Her complexion was as fair and fresh as an infant's"—so brilliant and so pure that she never wore paint or powder. Her arms, her hands, her feet were perfect; she had a neck "with which most would be wise to shun comparison"; and all around her was the atmosphere of triumphant youth—"that perfume and light as of an amorous goddess, which made Voltaire say of her portrait: '*L'original était fait pour les dieux.*'"

And he had found all this for himself! Louis XV. was content, then, to succeed Sainte-Foy as he had succeeded Pharamond; but, having succeeded, he reigned alone. He was tenacious of that dignity: it was almost the only one he retained, except in appearance. In youth, his head had been remarkable for its plastic beauty, and he never entirely lost this regal air. His personal dignity was to the end supreme.

Du Barry was right. It was going to last! When Lebel, alarmed at the duration of this caprice, warned His Majesty that the new mistress was not a woman of quality, nor even married, the King merely exclaimed, "Let a husband be found for her at once!" For etiquette demanded that the favourite should be a married woman. Du Barry was at no loss. He was unluckily himself a married man, but he had a brother, Guillaume, living quietly down at Toulouse. Guillaume was fetched to Paris, instructed, and persuaded. He acquiesced, and The Roué then set to work at the marriage-contract. It was a mere mass of lies, and the marriage-certificate was forged. Jeanne was provided with a father, Jean-Jacques Gomard de Vaubarnier; three years were taken off her age, though she was only twenty-five, and thus, aware and unprotesting, she went, at 5 a.m. on September 1st, 1768, to the "sacred ceremony" at the Church of Saint-Laurent, and left it—Madame Du Barry. She and her husband parted at the church-door, and never saw one another again. . . . There is the truth, and Louis never knew it. He had been duped—most flagrantly, most punishably, if the roguery had been discovered; yet the man who could have easily discovered it, the enemy of Jeanne Du Barry—Choiseul, the Prime Minister—never had courage to obtain the proofs which might have left him master of the situation. He preferred, as

his manner was, the subterranean method—with what results we shall see.

All that Jeanne desired from this new adventure was more diamonds, more silk-dresses, laces, pretty things of every kind; but she quickly found that when you go to the Court, you go to business. Intrigue! It is the kernel of Court existence; the moment she set foot in Versailles, intrigue awaited her. Du Barry, Richelieu, D'Aiguillon were behind her; Choiseul confronted her—Choiseul, the little ugly bright-eyed, red-haired man with the pug-dog face, the venomous, uncontrollable tongue, ever ready for sarcasms, ironies, witticisms; "with the nature which knew not hate nor revenge, but only spite"; with the gay easy manners which belonged to the period, and served him so well as a bait for popularity—Choiseul, the powerful Minister, "Lord High Everything Else," splendid, sumptuous, extravagant, living more like a king than the King—Choiseul, with his sister at his ear, that disappointed candidate for the post of favourite, Béatrice, Duchesse de Grammont, deeply sworn to vengeance upon this upstart who was even now (they said) intriguing for the Presentation which would proclaim her *maîtresse-en-titre*. . . . The King had already installed her at Versailles, had had re-established the Royal communications with her apartments—but surely it would stop there? Du Barry was resolved that it should not stop there. Presented Jeanne should be, and he sought for help at Court, quickly finding it in his old ally, the Duc de Richelieu. Richelieu was Choiseul's foe, but, *coureur de femmes* and little else, he was a man of straw. Behind him loomed the real antagonist, his nephew, that Duc d'Aiguillon who was the representative of the reactionary Party.

Choiseul stood for the spirit of the age. He belonged to the Jansenists, Parliamentarians, Philosophers, Encyclopædists—the party of reform in Church and State. D'Aiguillon was his antithesis—champion of religious and monarchical authority, protector of the Jesuits, upholder of things as they were. It was a duel of ideas, a "civil war of consciences," wherein the King was, as it were, the middle party—though he hated the Parliaments, indeed, with a deadly hatred. All through his reign, his relations with them were strained to breaking-point. "The

Will of the Sovereign is supreme": on that he took his stand. D'Aiguillon was with him there. But Louis was convinced, nevertheless, that Choiseul was the only man for France. The Minister's prestige abroad was enormous; by a judicious parade of it, he had acquired such influence that he felt himself perfectly secure.

Into this web stepped Jeanne Du Barry, totally ignorant of affairs, impatient of them, desirous of no connection with them—but with ambitious, restless men behind her. She had been presented after interminable delays—"the new Esther who was to replace Haman and deliver the people from oppression;" she had performed successfully all her duties as a Court lady; Louis was more infatuated than ever. . . . The incredible had happened; Du Barry's mistress and decoy was Queen of the Left Hand! Driven on by his frantic sister, Choiseul—always incautious in malice—utterly lost his head. He entered on that organized campaign of calumny which was to destroy himself, not her. Instead of unmasking her, he chose the way of pamphlets, paragraphs, pasquinades. Paris rang with obscene songlets; from every paper crept a snake; placards fluttered on the walls, the lamp-posts, plays were acted at booths and fairs—and Louis heard and saw, unheeding. The mistress herself was careless, too. She could not be made to rage. Had not the Lieutenant of Police been tiresome enough? "Madame, we have caught a rascal who sings scurrilous songs about you: what shall we do with him?"

"Make him sing them to you—and then give him something to eat!"

But there was that d'Aiguillon! He was very charming, very gallant (the songs of course proclaimed him as her lover), very assiduous—too assiduous! She was tutored unremittingly, shown the dangers, shown the proper attitude—worried to death, in a word, until at last from *Je m'en fiche!* she was driven to the evening-game with the oranges when, opposite the King in her radiant young beauty, she took the three golden balls, tossed them in the air, cried with a roguish glance from the *yeux fripons* of Choiseul's ballads: "*Saute, Choiseul! Saute, Praslin! Vive d'Aiguillon!*" *Sauter le ministre*—if that was the way to do

it, it was quite amusing. . . . Or an offending cook had been dismissed—a cook who looked a little like the Minister. "*Sire, j'ai renvoyé mon Choiseul. Quand renverrez-vous le vôtre?*" . . . Fun, if that was all, if that satisfied them! It was the only way she knew to carry out the d'Aiguillon behests. She wanted diamonds and dresses—not dismissals. Let them sing what songs they liked! All was well; why not leave it alone?

All was, indeed, astonishingly well. The freezing attitude of the Court ladies was breaking down; the men had always been ready to be kind; she was learning how to propitiate, how to win hearts. The Maréchale de Mirepoix, that extravagant, amusing old lady whom Louis liked so much, was her friend (as formerly she had been Madame de Pompadour's)—*La petite maressale est sarmante*, in the engaging lisp!—the Duc de Tresmes had written a gallant little note . . . best of all, she had been able to do some kindnesses through her influence with the King. That was what she liked; it pleased her warm heart and her vanity—her courtesan's vanity. A pardon, a reprieve, a pension, an appointment—the getting of anything like that Jeanne thoroughly enjoyed. To save a poor girl from the gallows, to obtain a little pension for *la petite maressale*, to help a good-looking, bashful light-horseman ("*Ah! mon chevau-léger!*") who lost his head for an instant at first sight of our beauty, "in a white dress with wreaths of roses on it"—to help him get a pardon for his deserter . . . that is our way of exercising influence! We love to dispense favours, see happy faces, hear eager thanks. That *chevau-léger* will not ask us for anything more, and we wish he would. We dub him *Monsieur qui ne demande pas*, and say, with a pout, to d'Aiguillon, "Are all your regiment like that?" "Assuredly not," answers d'Aiguillon, and the room rings with laughter. That is right—laughter, laughter! . . . But these intrigues, these dismissals—these dull Jansenists and Jesuits! If d'Aiguillon and Maupeou—Maupeou is the Chancellor—would but leave us in peace to laugh! But they will not, so we must get rid as quickly as we can of that *tracasserie de Choiseul*. We show the Minister plainly, then, that we resent him. When he is our partner at whist, we shrug lovely shoulders, pout lovely lips; we do our best to satisfy

these relentless men who tutor us—and at last, hastened by the first shadow of mistrust in Louis' mind for Choiseul's foreign policy, the blow fell. On the 24th December, 1770, the First Minister received a *lettre de cachet* from the King, ordering him to resign all his posts, and retire to Chanteloup till further orders.

No one less elated at this fall than Jeanne Du Barry. Without d'Aiguillon, "who pestered her, pursued her, importuned her day and night with his ambition and his hatreds," she would willingly have patched up any kind of a truce with Choiseul. She would indeed have liked him if he had given her a chance; she had done her very best to be friends. That Choiseul repulsed her to his own downfall, might have an air of nobility, though never of sagacity, if we did not know that in after-years he solicited her through a friend to obtain him a larger pension. She did obtain it; she threw herself heart and soul into the affair—and he, in his Memoirs, still has nothing but spiteful, virtuous indignation for her name. As M. Vatel remarks, "He succeeded in proving that there is a creature infinitely more loathsome than a courtesan—and that is a courtier."

For the rest, it was all smiles, gaiety, extravagance. She became a patroness of the arts like Pompadour; she imitated Pompadour in everything. Only that great lady's hobby had been graven gems, and Madame Du Barry's,—after "*la toilette, sa grande affaire et sa grande ruine*"—was porcelain. She filled Luciennes with exquisite things, and everywhere reigned and triumphed porcelain. Luciennes was the country-house given her by Louis—"*la petite maison des petits-arts du dix-huitième siècle.*" Porcelain, silver, gold—for soon she took a fancy to have her dinner-service all in gold, with jasper-handles. Then a toilet-service in gold was ordered, but the expense was so enormous that she was obliged to give up that caprice—and in her accounts we find an indemnity to the jeweller for "a gold toilet-service begun and not finished." And diamonds, laces, Drouais' portraits, sumptuous liveries for her servants, green parroquets, every folly, every luxury—"the best-treated kept-woman in the kingdom," her only crumpled rose-leaf that haughty, insulting demeanour

of Marie-Antoinette, young Dauphiness, who when she first came to Court had asked, in her innocence, "What Madame Du Barry's special function was?"

"Madame," said a tactful courtier—"to amuse the King."

"Then I swear that I will take her place," the girl had cried, merrily. But she learnt ere long Madame Du Barry's function, and could never be coaxed or coerced even into a show of tolerance.

Warm-hearted careless Jeanne was sorry, made many an effort—no? The Dauphiness will not speak to us? *Zut alors!* We have everything else.

All that for six years. And then? . . . It is April, 1774. There is an evil augury for April in the *Almanach de Liège.* "A great lady playing a part at Court will cease to play it."

"*Je voudrais bien passer ce vilain mois d'avril!*"

On the 27th, His Majesty falls ill while visiting us at Petit Trianon. He is taken home to Versailles next day, though we would fain have kept him and he would fain have stayed in the light, airy rooms. . . . What is it? It is small-pox—caught, history knows not surely how, though many a tale is told. On the 4th of May we are sent for. We issue from the sick-room, "with visible trouble in our visage." What is it we have heard from those frightful, dying lips? "It is time, Madame, that we should leave one another." . . . Ah, he has always been so! Was not the Châteauroux driven away that time of the fever at Metz? Did not even the Pompadour tremble after the attack of Damiens? For Louis has a conscience—"believes at least in a Devil." He is resolved to "make the *amende honorable*" * to God. We must go.

On the 5th of May, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Madame Du Barry left Versailles with the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, and retired to Rueil, the d'Aiguillon country-house, three leagues distant. On the 9th, the King died. Shortly afterwards, she received a

* "As the Abbé Georgel, in words that stick to one, expresses it." (Carlyle).

lettre de cachet, ordering her to retire to a convent. "Shut are the Royal palace-gates for evermore."

Little remains, except the last great amazement. She never returned to Court. After a period of banishment from its very neighbourhood, she was permitted to live for the rest of her life at her beloved Luciennes. Extravagant as ever, generous as ever, there she spent her days, the Lady Bountiful of her home—the Diamond-Queen, as it were, of Europe! She had two lovers—the first, Henry Seymour, a married Englishman; the second, the Duc de Brissac, faithful unto death.

The affair with Henry Seymour was short and poignant; her letters to him remain—the most touching, timid, gentle. . . . His love died first:—

"It is idle to speak of my affection for you—you know it. But what you do not know is my pain. You have not deigned to reassure me about that which most matters to my heart. And so I must believe that my ease of mind, my happiness, are of little importance to you. I am sorry that I should have to allude to them—it is for the last time." . . . Strange—to think of the Du Barry we have known, writing that letter! But the pain was not too long. The exquisite creature, more lovely than ever—Cosway painted her miniature when she went to England not long before her death, "perhaps the most adorable image we have of her" . . . she was soon all de Brissac's, as he was all hers. Their love ended only with their lives. And both lives ended on the scaffold. Surely Fate was sworn to the Improbable when she dealt the cards to Jeanne Bécu! The Revolution overtook the lovers. De Brissac went first. It was said that the mob threw his head into the drawing-room at Luciennes before her feet. . . . That was in 1792. Her hour came in 1793. "They snatched her, not only as ex-harlot of a whilom Majesty, and therefore suspect; but as having furnished the emigrants with money"—as cherishing the memory of Louis Capet, as wearing a medallion of the thrice-accursed Pitt. . . . Already much had happened. Her old enemies, the former Dauphin and Dauphiness, had gone before her. She had had the chance, in the hour of danger, to

prove to Marie-Antoinette how little revengeful was "the most foolish and impertinent creature imaginable." She had succoured wounded soldiers of the Queen, she had offered to restore to the Crown her darling home, Luciennes.

Ah! she was generous-hearted. But she was not proud-hearted. We will not spell out that rending story—the lamentable, many-witnessed scene of her struggles, her shrieks, her "rush to the edge of the scaffold," the hideous dragging sound of her feet on the boards as they pulled her backwards, her cry, "Help, help!" (*À moi!*)—when there was none to help, neither any to pity. . . . Yet the crowd had been stirred for an instant. "They were so accustomed to noble deaths that, for the first time, watching this one, it occurred to them that here was a woman going to be *killed*." But the instant passed: the crowd was soon itself again. . . .

So fell the lovely, empty head.

"Thou unclean, yet unmalignant, not unpitiable thing! What a course was thine: from that first truckle-bed (in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother bore thee, with tears, to an unnamed father: forward, through lowest subterranean depths, and over highest sunlit heights, of Harlotdom and Rascaldom—to the guillotine-axe, which shears away thy vainly-whimpering head! Rest there uncursed; only buried and abolished: what else befitted thee?"

THE ROYAL LADY

HENRIETTE D'ORLÉANS

D'ANGLETERRE

("MADAME")

1644–1670

AN elusive figure, this of Henrietta Stuart, called "of England," because she was so much more of France! Her beauty was the theme of two great Courts—yet it remains the secret of her time. Impossible for modern eyes to perceive it. We see a thin pale interesting face, a little slender unimpressive figure. . . . "That is Madame," we murmur doubtfully, remembering the chorus of enthusiasm which rent the air of the French and English Courts whenever she appeared. Madame de Motteville comes to our rescue. "Her beauty was not of the most perfect kind, but her charming manners made her very attractive;" and an anonymous contemporary gives us, in a phrase, the magic word to invoke her:—"*On dirait qu'elle demande le cœur*" . . . Her charm was supreme. That was the secret of her unbounded popularity—she is perhaps the most popular woman of whom history has to tell. Adoration was part of the air she breathed. "One would have said that her spirit possessed her body." There, no doubt, is the reason why her pictures fail to reveal her. Lovely as was her colouring, with that skin like "rose-o'ershadowed lilies," that golden-red hair, those deep blue eyes and flower-like lips, it was her expression and her atmosphere which captured every heart, together with that infinite gentleness which made her friend, Madame de La Fayette, say of her last hours that "*Madame fut douce envers la mort comme elle l'était envers tout le monde.*"

Yet her husband, who began by being in love with her, loved her, in his own unchivalrous words, "no longer than a fortnight." His heart was indeed not worth the keeping, but the strange thing is that Henrietta Stuart lost men's hearts often. The men who were never in love with her, on the contrary, never altered in their devotion. Her intelligence was of exquisite quality; she was a fine critic of literature, a diplomatist of the highest order—and a woman with whom, nevertheless, we feel perpetually angry. . . Elusive, in a word; and, oddly enough, her life began with flight! She was born* "by a Queen in peril to the sound of arms"; scarcely a fortnight later, her mother, Henrietta-Maria, Queen of Charles I., fled (leaving the child behind), from England to France, her native land; a year later, Exeter was again invested, and the baby-Princess, with her devoted Lady Dalkeith, was kept there through the siege. When the city surrendered, she was taken to Salisbury, thence to Oatlands, by order of the Parliament—and from Oatlands, Lady Dalkeith in her turn fled to France. She disguised herself as a poor woman; little Henrietta, to her vast indignation, was dressed as a boy and called Pierre. In her baby-language, all along the Dover Road, she insisted that she was not Pierre, but "the Princess," and that these rags were not her real clothes. Luckily no one understood her, so Lady Dalkeith reached Paris and Henrietta-Maria in safety.

A sufficiently romantic beginning—yet Henrietta, when she dictated her memoirs to Madame de La Fayette, ignored entirely her early life. "*On dirait que cette jolie femme se croyait née le jour où elle fut aimée pour la première fois!*"† That was when the Duke of Buckingham saw her in London. She was sixteen, already betrothed to "Monsieur,"—otherwise Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, only brother of Louis XIV.; and had come to England with her mother on business connected with this alliance. The country went mad about her. Two other Royal suitors had sent their envoys to Charles II., who, however, preferred the French alliance to any other; and Buckingham

* At Exeter, in June, 1644.

† M. Anatole France. Introduction to his Edition of Madame de La Fayette's *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre.* (1882.)

DUCHESS OF ORLEANS

From an Old Print

hastened to add himself to the list of her conquests. He had been a suitor of her sister Mary, the widowed Princess of Orange —but when Henrietta arrived, he fell so deeply in love with her that he almost lost his reason. She was not disturbed; we do not hear that she encouraged him. Buckingham was handsome, yet he somehow had no luck in love. With Henrietta, he never seems to have made any way at all, although she was a coquette of the most untiring order. But her *goût de galanterie* was all from the head, for the imagination; her folly stopped short ever in a fright at what the world might say, but in a fright at nothing better than that. She was never afraid of herself, nor of where herself might lead her: one bogey she had, and one only—Public Opinion.

Exquisite as she was, we miss in her some quality which far more faulty women have possessed: some vital impulse, some power of deep feeling. . . . The Court-lady, the Queen and High-Priestess of Convention—that was what essentially she was, yet she never accepted herself in the part; rather, she seemed incessantly to try how far she could go without losing caste, in any other. And when the limit had been reached and people were talking—at once we find her on her knees to somebody to help her out! "Twy-natured is no-natured"; with Henrietta Stuart, in truth, we are sometimes tempted to think that Nature had nothing to do. The Court formed her, possessed her. "There's nothing in the world like etiquette": deep in her heart that maxim lay, for all her follies, for all her gracious friendships and condescensions. The Stuart glamour, the Stuart lightness, the Stuart melancholy: she inherited them all. Charles II. escaped the melancholy; Charles I., the lightness; she had both. A ballet could distract her when her only little son was ill—a ballet entered into by the King's desire. For the King came first. She was the courtier before she was the mother. She paid for her courtier's life with her own.

The child began her Court-triumphs at nine. Her mother—*la reine malheureuse*, as she named herself after the tragedy of 1649—had brought her up austerely enough. Henrietta-Maria

was the daughter of Henry of Navarre, the People's King: her daughter was taught simplicity, even humility—she used to wait hand and foot upon the nuns at her mother's Convent of the Filles-Sainte-Marie at Chaillot. The external graces of this early discipline survived in her consummate courtesy, and that gentleness which is the key-note to every description of her. The Stuart pride was, in truth, too immense to be displayed in any other fashion. They had the secret—to such a degree that, by comparison, no other family seems to have it—of making good-breeding romantic. The gesture of a Stuart hand, stretched out for kissing, had an air for ever uncaptured by other Royalties: courtiers bent, one imagines, with something of a lover's thrill. . . . Literally, the Stuarts *were* the Royal Idea.

Married at seventeen to the only brother of Louis XIV., Henrietta Stuart became to all intents and purposes a Frenchwoman. Monsieur began by being much in love. He was something of a horror. Extremely good-looking, there yet was a harmful disquieting atmosphere about him, a suggestion of corruptness—only too well affirmed in later life, and even then displaying itself through a horrible fancy for dressing in women's clothes whenever he possibly could. He would have worn petticoats to Mass or to the theatre, if his rank had permitted; he *could* wear them at balls—and he did, dancing the minuet with all the airs and graces of a fine lady. He was incredibly puerile, spiteful, paltry—he had been brought up to be incapable of affairs, surrounded purposely by vicious and detestable companions, but Louis XIV. had had the same evil fortune, and had managed to escape its worst consequences. A more ill-judged union than that of this Prince with Henrietta Stuart was never made. She was not a woman who influenced men. Fastidious, cold, and frivolous, she endured—she did not seek to alter. Detestable he was, and she left him so. He was very jealous—"more of her mind than of her body"—and she gave him incessant cause for jealousy, not only with her love-affairs but with her friendships—her friendship with Louis XIV. above all.

Louis had not admired her in early days. She had been suggested as a Queen for him, but he had shown so plainly his indifference that the project had never taken shape. In her

extreme youth, she was slender to emaciation—"the Bones of the Holy Innocents" was the King's naughty name for her. But when, after the visit to England, she blossomed out into a beauty, and enchanted the Court by her charm and her delicious dancing, he suddenly perceived that his sister-in-law was worthy of a lost head—lost his accordingly, and set the whole place agog. She acquiesced; it was good etiquette to be admired by His Majesty. But soon enough her Inevitable happened. Anne of Austria showed displeasure, and Henrietta was instantly *au désespoir*. What should they do—she and Louis—to prove their innocence (for innocent they were) in such a way that no one could mistake? The way they chose was far from admirable. Among Henrietta's ladies was a very young and very lovely girl—Louise de La Vallière, malleable, timid, entirely guileless. Of her it was agreed to make a blind. The King was to pay her marked attention, and thus distract the gossips from the truth. But Louise de La Vallière, unwitting tool of intrigue, was soon revenged of an injury which she never even suspected. Credulous and incredulous at once, she listened to the Royal wooing with a gentle, trembling amazement which won the Royal heart. Henrietta found herself taking in reality that second place which she was to have feigned to take—and, not unnaturally, she resented it. There was pretext for resentment, it is true, for the La Vallière affair became an open scandal; but no clear-sighted reader of the Court-gossip can miss the note of personal anger in Madame's attitude towards the girl. It was then that Madame first became entangled with the Comtesse de Soissons (Olympe Mancini), a woman whose name is synonymous with treachery. She had been an early mistress of the King, and though she had been twice replaced and had never loved him, she still cherished an impotent ambition, born of vanity—the ambition to rule at Court. Her lover was now that irresistible scoundrel, the Marquis de Vardes, "the very match for her;" and Vardes, for some inscrutable reason of his own, had designs upon Madame. . . . We have entered the repugnant labyrinth of Court intrigue —a region of incessant and futile activity, where no end is pursued but that of malice. In its stifling atmosphere we will not linger. Enough that Madame lent herself to the jealousy of

Olympe Mancini, and arranged for her an interview with the Queen—Marie-Thérèse—wherein that unhappy lady's eyes should be opened to the truth. Marie-Thérèse had for long been miserable; she knew that her husband's faith with her was broken, but she knew not certainly whom to accuse. *"En attendant, elle détestait Madame!"* And Madame, stung by this injustice and by the mortification of the whole episode, keenly desired that the Queen should know the real state of affairs. . . . That was natural enough; yet there is nothing in Henrietta's conduct, from first to last in this affair, which awakens any sort of sympathy. She had pushed a young and innocent girl into the King's arms to save herself from her bogey, Public Opinion; and now, humiliated though relieved, she desired to complete her work and her own salvation by betraying her to the Queen. And she chose for her instruments the two basest creatures of the Court. That was stupid, indeed! For all her qualities of mind, she lacked that mere intuition which saves less brilliant women from the *tracasseries* with which she was for ever surrounded. If she cleared herself now from one kind of comment, she exposed herself at the same moment to another. The Marquis de Vardes involved her in a web of petty scandal which it would be idle to examine closely; he almost succeeded in embroiling her and Charles II. with the King, for she had had the incredible folly to show her brother's most private letters to him, and to let him know her own most private feelings for that strange personage, Armand, Comte de Guiche, with whom she had the nearest approach to a lasting love-affair which ever entered her life.

We have spoken of her *goût de galanterie. Galanterie*, in seventeenth-century speech, ("which is almost," M. Anatole France tells us, "a dead language,") meant something quite different from its more usual meaning. It meant then a gay, polished, agreeable way of doing and saying things; it was an art sedulously cultivated by those who had the talent, an *œuvre d'esprit* not to be spoiled by coarse realities. Madame was always ready for this amusement. She would have liked a bout of it with the King, but he was made of the stuff at which *galanterie* shuddered: "coarse reality" was to him essential in a

love-affair. Thus it was that he so quickly broke away from Madame's influence. The Comte de Guiche, on the other hand, was the true type she needed. She was conquered by "his proud bearing, like a paladin of old renown," the romantic airs which were the dress, so to speak, of the part. He knew every move in the game, and played it with his whole soul. "He was full of audacity, and yet of reverence;" he could invent the most amazing situations, the most devious-adventurous ways of meeting, the maddest disguises—and, above all, he was an untiring letter-writer! This was indispensable; and the more difficult of comprehension the letters were, the finer was the *galanterie* they displayed. De Guiche excelled in this sort. Madame read the cryptic epistles with devout admiration, "and from time to time, no doubt, found means to raise her knight from the depths of his despair."

"*Est-ce là tout? Je le crois*," says M. France—for de Guiche expressed a profound distaste for the realities of love. . . . There was gossip, indeed, on this score. "*Sa femme avait été mariée sans l'être*," observes Madame de Motteville. "These things may not be true," comments M. France, "but there are some men of whom they are never said—Henri IV., for example! De Guiche must have in some way given the impression." No doubt he did, for he was intensely affected, intensely vain: "he lived for *amour-propre*; he died for it, too"—and died heroically, for a brilliant bravery was part of the Gentle Art of Gallantry.

Such a cavalier, all airs and graces and devotion, compared but too favourably with Henrietta's lamentable husband, who, with his peevish, spiteful humours, made her existence purgatorial. She escaped from his persecution to the intoxicating atmosphere of Court flatteries; and she found there besides, awaiting only her acceptance, the devotion of the brilliant and notoriously fastidious Armand de Guiche.* Secret meetings, cunning maids-

* This was in 1662 after the birth of her first child, a daughter by whose sex the mother was so disappointed that she cried, on realising it, "Throw her into the river." It is difficult either to forget or forgive this outburst. The child was that Marie-Louise who, married in 1679 to the King of Spain, was to die in the flower of her age (after ten years of miserable marriage), as suddenly and as tragically as her mother, and with the same rumour of poison around her bed of anguish!

of-honour, private staircases, concealings of the exquisite cavalier in sooty chimneys; Vardes malignant, jealous, and for a time triumphant; Guiche high-hearted, guileless, and betrayed; Henrietta, torn between the attraction which both men had for her, but dominated by the infinitely stronger personality of Vardes ("She had for Vardes a more natural feeling than she had for Guiche") . . . here is a typical love-affair of the Court, where although the villain is adroit, it surely seems that hero and heroine overplay the imbecility from of old attached to their rôles! Guiche was packed off to the war in Poland, entirely through the clever plotting of Vardes, his friend and confidant. The villain was then master of the situation and of the Princess, who went from folly to folly, surpassing herself in an avowal to him, after news from the war, that "she now saw she had cared more for the Comte de Guiche than she had ever known!" Vardes, unaccustomed to failure in "love," swore to revenge himself—but the Comtesse de Soissons intervened. When it was a question of treachery, Olympe Mancini was bound to win, and she won now. Wild with jealousy, she unmasked her faithless lover to her rival Henrietta—and, at the same moment, Guiche returned from the war. It was June 1664: Madame had just given birth to her son, the Duc de Valois. Guiche felt uneasy, for she had refused to see him and had commissioned the King to retrieve for her the letters she had written "Armand" during his absence, and a portrait of herself which she had had done for him. . . . But who was the traitor? The hero's loyalty wavered—could it be his friend, his confidant, Vardes? He doubted, yet he heroically trusted—for he gave to Vardes a letter for Madame, wherein all was explained! Vardes managed to achieve an audience with the Princess, who was not yet seeing anybody. He threw himself on his knees, he wept and begged for mercy—if she would act with him in this affair, nothing should ever be known. "Will you read Guiche's letter?" asked Vardes at last. No! she would not—" and she did well to refuse, for Vardes had already shown it to the King, and had told him that Madame was deceiving him." In the end, the help of Louis XIV. had to be claimed. He cut the Gordian knot with decision—sent Vardes to the Bastille. But it was not enough.

The Bastille, in those days, was scarcely imprisonment at all. A second King's intervention was needful for the ending of this storm in a tea-cup. Charles II. was appealed to, and Vardes was finally exiled to his little Government of Aigues-Mortes, "there to meditate at his leisure on the inconvenience of over-doing impertinence and duplicity." . . . It was a question of Madame's honour? True. But—"*deux amants à la fois!*" Sympathy and admiration are ludicrously out of place in such an episode—yet some of Henrietta's chroniclers enjoin them on us with insistence.

Meanwhile, Guiche had failed to see his lady, could obtain from her nothing but cold, courteous messages—so it was plainly the duty of a *galant' homme* to be in wild despair. He played the part with his customary perfection, and at last Destiny gave him not only his opportunity, but the ideal *mise-en-scène* for it. A masked ball! Madame present, but unknown! Could anything fitter be conceived? Entering the house, the lady meets a mysterious *beau masque*: she accepts the proffered arm—suddenly notices a maimed hand. (Guiche's fingers had been partly shot off in battle.) He, on his side, till then unconscious, recognises the familiar perfume of her hair. Both are struck dumb; they mount the stairs in silence. Then—explanations! Madame, for the first time, knows all. They are completely reconciled. But the husband approaches: they must part. She turns hastily to join the incarnation of duty, entangles her foot in her gown, falls down a flight of steps. Guiche, Favourite of Destiny, catches her in his arms. . . . All is well. But no! for the lady will not see her knight again. They are reconciled, but it is over. Guiche is advised to leave the Court. He is ill of a fever—incurably picturesque fellow!—but will not go without seeing her again. Weak, romantic, exquisite, he will disguise himself once more. "He borrowed the livery of one of La Vallière's servants" (a little stroke of irony, that!), "and stood in this disguise in the Court-yard of the Palais-Royal, to see Madame pass by in her chair." He even drew near and spoke to her, but when the moment came to say farewell, Guiche—was there ever such a lucky devil!—Guiche fainted away. Madame's chair passed on. He never saw her again. . . . "If the manner

of his farewell cost Madame a pang, she yet did not see the end of this little episode without relief," says Madame de La Fayette; and of Guiche we hear that "eighteen months after Madame's death, he was wooing Madame de Brissac. But she dismissed him—he was too respectful." *

This then was *galanterie*. Madame was content with her experience. Guiche was gone, Vardes was gone, Olympe Mancini was banished—but "people had talked." . . . She resolved to turn over a new leaf.

Madame de La Fayette's book stops at this farewell interview. It was then, in 1665, that the Princess said to her, "Don't you think that if all the things which have happened to me were written down, they would make an interesting book?" And she added, "You write well. Write this—I'll give you the material." So the history was begun, but was soon abandoned. Then, in 1669, Madame, sad and ailing and tormented by the pestilent husband, took up the caprice again. They got as far as the Guiche farewell—and there one of them ceased for ever to collaborate. In 1670, Madame de La Fayette resumed her pen to write an account of the last hours of her adored Princess. "The La Fayette book seems so destined for the recounting of love-affairs that it would naturally stop when they stopped," remarks M. Anatole France. Madame's life, after 1665, became more serious, her thoughts were occupied with more important things—and she herself becomes instantly more interesting and more admirable. When she handled love, she handled it with the inevitable clumsiness which comes of wearing gloves; she was not made for passion—she never felt it, and she never inspired it. Friendship, on the contrary, she exquisitely inspired; and affection was the mainspring of her existence. Charles II.'s letters to her bear always as superscription, "To my dear, dear sister"—for *Chère Minette*, as he called her, was the very core of his heart. Louis XIV. also was brotherly-devoted to her, though in the later times of perpetual trouble with Monsieur and his atrocious intimate, the Chevalier de Lorraine, ("*fait comme on peint les anges*"!) the strain grew occasionally very tense. It was at these times that they loved, in M. France's fine irony,

* M. Anatole France.

"like brother and sister, *et même un peu moins, si c'est possible!*" Madame found him unsatisfactory; she even wrote of him, "The King is one of those people who cannot make the happiness of those to whom he most desires to be kind. His mistresses, as we all know, have two or three mortifications to put up with every week—so what can his friends expect?"

That was in April, 1670, shortly before she made her famous visit to England as the unofficial Ambassador of France. She went on May 26th to Dover, for Monsieur, intractable as ever, would not let her go to London; he was jealous of her intimate and trusted position with the two Kings. From Dover, she brought back the Secret Treaty, by which Charles bound himself to join Louis in the invasion of Holland and to co-operate with him by sea and land, in return for large subsidies during the war and a share of the spoils. Charles also bound himself to profess publicly the Roman Catholic faith; Louis, in return for this concession, was to pay down another large sum, and in case of a resulting civil war to supply men and more money. This Treaty has been called the Sale of England to France, and Madame has been blamed for her share in the business. Whatever we may think of Charles, it is difficult to blame a Princess to whom Roman Catholicism was the one true religion, and who was far more French than English in everything except birth—and half-French in that. Moreover, the Stuarts were predestined Roman Catholics. The Duke of York, who had been brought up a Protestant, had long ago reverted to his mother's faith; Charles himself had secretly acknowledged it, the year before this Treaty. It was the dream of Henrietta Stuart to restore Catholicism in England. Her opportunity arrived, and she used it with an exquisite diplomacy, breaking down difficulties and oppositions thitherto believed insurmountable. . . . Her stay in England lasted twenty days; on June 15th, she came back to receive her reward in the gratitude and adulation of her adopted King. But she came back also, alas! to the tormented family-life—to a husband furious at the punishment of his odious favourite, (the Chevalier de Lorraine had been exiled from France by Louis XIV.,) and, moreover, bitterly jealous of his wife's honours. For all her triumph, it was a very

pitiful lady who appeared now at Court-festivities. Her mother was dead, her little son had long been dead; her friend, Daniel de Cosnac, Bishop of Valence, was banished from Court—she was very lonely and very ill. "She came in to the Queen looking like a dead person dressed up and rouged, and when she was gone, the Queen and I said to one another, "Death is written in Madame's face." *

That was on June 26th, a Thursday—very hot. On Friday she felt ill, and gave up, by her doctor's orders, her intention of bathing in the Seine that day, though she only put it off until the morrow. On Saturday, at ten o'clock in the evening, Madame de La Fayette arrived at Saint-Cloud, and found her walking in the garden—it was a glorious moonlight. She felt ill; but she stayed out till twelve. On Sunday, she confessed to feeling ill and miserable—"cross" she said; but "her crossness would have been the good-humour of anyone else, *tant elle avait de douceur naturelle*." "I'm not so bad when I can talk to you," she continued; "but I'm so tired of all the rest—I can't bear them!" . . . So the day went by: she dined, and after dinner lay down among cushions placed on the floor—a habit of hers—with her head on Madame de La Fayette's knees. Looking down at her thus, that lady was struck by the terrible alteration in her features—so great that when she woke, even Monsieur noticed it. Soon afterwards, she asked for a glass of iced chicory-water. Her lady-in-waiting handed it to her. She drank—and instantly pressed her hand to her side, crying, "Oh, such a pain! I can't bear it . . . I am poisoned!" The terrible anguish continued; she had to be put to bed. The Court-doctors were sent for; they said it was "an ordinary colic." But she exclaimed that it was far more serious than they thought, she was going to die, and they must send for her confessor. Monsieur was by her bed; she embraced him and said with all her gentleness, "Ah, you love me no more—for long you have not loved me. It is unjust: I have never failed you." Monsieur seemed deeply touched, but he said nothing. . . . All at once she insisted that they should examine what she had drunk—it was certainly poison, and they must bring her an antidote. Monsieur acquiesced

* Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

composedly. Two of her ladies drank the same chicory-water from the same cup before her eyes, and several antidotes were tried, but they only made her worse. She then fell into a kind of stupor which they audibly hoped was a relief to her, but she said, "No—it was merely that she no longer had the strength to cry out, though she was suffering as much as ever."

She was certain that she was dying, and Monsieur, infected by her conviction, grew uneasy; but the doctors insisted that there was no danger. The curé of Saint-Cloud arrived; she confessed to him, then talked in a low voice to her husband. Two more Court-physicians soon swelled the throng in her room: "On our life, there is no danger," they averred—and the sufferer groaned from her pillows that they were mistaken. . . . Night was now come, and her attendants murmured all around her that she was better. "That is so little the case," she said, "that if I were not a Christian, I should kill myself, so desperate is my suffering. We must not wish any one ill, but I do wish that the doctors could feel for one moment what *I* am feeling, so as to have some idea of my anguish." A light was held near her eyes, and Monsieur asked if it worried her. "Oh no! nothing worries me any more. I shan't be alive to-morrow morning; you'll see!" They gave her some soup—but it redoubled her agonies.

At half-past ten the King arrived. By this time, even the Court-physicians were getting uneasy. "She is in great danger; she must have the Last Sacraments." "But I never heard," said the King, "of a woman being allowed to die like this without any attempt to save her!" They maintained that the only thing to do was to wait and see. Louis told her this: she shrugged and said that *she supposed she must die according to etiquette.* "The first news you will hear in the morning," she went on, "will be of my death. Kiss me, Sire, for the last time. Oh, do not weep for me—you will distress me, Sire. . . . You are losing a faithful servant, who has always feared the loss of your favour more than death." The King's heart was so torn that he could not utter a word; he was obliged to withdraw. Madame de La Fayette then asked that the Bishop of Condom —Bossuet, whom the Princess had lately come to know and

esteem—should be sent for. It was done, but in the meantime arrived M. Nicolas Feuillet, a Jansenist Canon of Saint-Cloud. This worthy's behaviour, though doubtless prompted by extreme piety, was a mere outrage. It infuriates one to read his harrying of the tortured woman.

"You see, M. Feuillet," she said, as he drew near, "the state to which I am reduced."

"A very good state, Madame. You will now confess that there is a God in Heaven, whom you have never really known."

"*Mon Dieu!*" she cried, a little later, "when will these fearful pains cease?"

"What, Madame, are you already impatient? You have been sinning against God for twenty-six years, and you have only begun to do penance in these last six hours" . . .

Feuillet relates these things of himself—otherwise it might be difficult to believe them. He was, to the reader's relief, quickly deprived of the opportunity for any further display—for at this moment, arrived the great priest Bossuet, Bishop of Condom. Her pale face lit up when she saw him. "*L'espérance, Madame—l'espérance!*" he cried, as his eyes met hers, and coming quickly to her, he placed the crucifix in her hands. All that he said was on the same note of uplifting rapture—and when he left her side for an instant to give her rest, she called one of her maids and whispered in English, "Give M. de Condom the emerald ring I have had made for him, when I am dead." . . .* The Jansenist still stood near. She said to him, "It is all over. Call M. de Condom." He came, he heard the last sigh of avowal . . . the crucifix dropped from her hands.

It was three o'clock in the morning of the last day of June. She was only twenty-six years old.

She had not been poisoned. For long the rumour ran that through Lorraine's agency, the silver goblet from which she drank had been rubbed with a deadly powder. Saint-Simon tells a dramatic story of a confronting of Lorraine's accomplice with Louis XIV.; but the story is unauthenticated. Medical

* It flashed upon his finger while he made his immortal funeral oration.

knowledge has fortunately made advances since those Court-physicians answered for her life till she was dead. An autopsy was made. It is now known, though it was not known then, (even after the autopsy) that Madame died of acute peritonitis ;* but the wonder was, indeed, that she had lived so long, for her constitution was utterly undermined, and one lung was quite gone. She had been frail from birth, and her life had been one never-ending excitement, worry, and fatigue. Her restlessness was abnormal—she *could* not keep quiet. It was habit: she had carried the Court-life on her shoulders ever since she married—that life "which was idle to the point of discomfort." One might almost say it was Etiquette that killed her. Those whispering, fumbling, lamentable Court-physicians! That crowded, murmuring sick-room, where soldiers, Ambassadors, Ministers, King's mistresses (La Vallière and Montespan together, in their strange and ambiguous companionship!), Princes and Princesses, King and Queen themselves, watched the long, sudden agony . . . here, O fortunate lesser men, is the courtier's death-bed! Truly, Henrietta Stuart, exquisite lady of the Court, died, as she had lived and desired to live, "according to etiquette."

* Littré. *Médicine et Médecins.*

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

1755–1793

OF Marie-Antoinette, to know what to say makes one but the more incapable of saying it. It is as if History stood for ever by a death-bed where the last dark hours are reckoned, like the fair ones on the sun-dial, the only hours—and where Compassion alone is privileged to see clear. We read, with amused curiosity, the Mercy-Argenteau * Correspondence with Maria-Theresa (from 1770 to 1780): that *procès-verbal,* as the Goncourts call it, "of all the pedantic old grumblings of her elders about her dresses, her feathers, her everything—*le dossier accusateur de toute jolie femme!*" We consider, still with curiosity, "that unutterable business of the Diamond Necklace;" we follow her, composedly enough, through the dire adventure of Varennes—and plan to write of all with zest and sympathy and perchance a spice of malice. . . . But then, once more, the tale of her imprisonment, her widowhood, her death, comes into our hands; and, once more, nothing matters for us but that, and nothing, we think, can be told but that.

Born on a day of earthquake,† she was from the first ill-starred. Omens never spoke more plainly. Her mother, that professional sovereign, Maria-Theresa of Austria, once inquired of a clairvoyant the fate of her Antoinette. He turned pale. *Madame, there are crosses for all shoulders;* and would say no more. . . . At Strasbourg, on her wedding-journey, what did Goethe notice? The tapestry hangings in her Pavilion! Jason, Creusa, and Medea—"the most fatal union in history"—was

* He was Austrian Ambassador at Paris.

† November 2, 1755. Earthquake at Lisbon. (*Le Jour des Morts.*)

the subject. "The bride was struggling in a dreadful death. The Fury was soaring into the air, her chariot drawn by dragons. Was not the dread omen accomplished in every part?" Her marriage-festivities were crushed under wildest disaster; the scaffoldings on the Place Louis XV. caught fire, there was trampling of horses, plunder, death. She, coming in her young triumph from Versailles, heard the awful news, the cries of the dying—and fled, not to return for three long years.

Fled back to Versailles, to that detestable Court-life! Detestable at any time, in any place—almost, one would say, unlivable for human beings—in France, at the time of her marriage (1770) it was infinitely more detestable even than elsewhere. "Exiles from living life," the Royal family and the Court led a strange cloistered existence, like that of oriental princes: it was a sort of imprisonment at Versailles and its annexes—Marly, Choisy-le-Roi, Compiègne, Fontainebleau, whither the Court went every year, at regular seasons, with its long trail of followers. No one desired to know what went on; the Court and Paris were the antipodes of each other; at the end of two years, Marie-Antoinette had not yet visited Paris. "Fateful and presageful, such isolation, such divergence from the Spirit of the Age" . . . And the life, the chosen life! Insipid and monotonous dissipation—hunting, always hunting; gambling, always gambling—to the never-ending obligato of intrigue. "They watched one another, each from his own den, like a lot of animals." The King was almost invisible, Dubarry's creature, nothing more. Then there were Mesdames, his daughters—"Rag, Snip, and Pig"—embittered and *dévotes*, (that most deadly combination!) disliked and disliking; there was the Comte de Provence, manœuvring against his elder brother, the Dauphin; the Comte d'Artois, manœuvring against both; the Du Barry party, Choiseul party, d'Orléans party—what a place, under the light of Heaven!

Brought up in that home-like Austrian Court, where love almost reigned instead of fear and cunning, she had an ironical turn of mind, and she quickly dubbed her chief lady-in-waiting "Madame l'Etiquette": a good name for that Comtesse de Noailles, who understood it thoroughly, and only *it*—in all this

glancing, beaming universe! One day, the fifteen-year-old girl, riding her donkey, was thrown, with the swirl of petticoats that may be imagined. Lying on her back, she laughed aloud. "Go and call Madame de Noailles and ask her the correct etiquette for a Princess fallen from a donkey!" . . . She liked noise and laughter; she was always surrounded by a lot of yapping little dogs; she invented the silliest school-girl pranks—"passing like a gleam, like a song, careless of her train and of her ladies, she does not walk—she runs!" It was all very well for Maria-Theresa and Mercy-Argenteau to lecture, to pull long faces—she was a married woman, was she? *No, she wasn't.* . . . At last she blurted it out. Somebody had begged her not to ride so much: it might injure her. "*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiselle," she cried, "leave me in peace. Be assured that I can put no heir in danger." What a flash in the eyes, curl in the lip, revolt in the soul, as she flung that speech at the Court! In truth, she could endanger no heir. Young and lovely, well-tutored in her supreme duty as Dauphiness of France, she was confronted with an enigma which would have angered her more seriously if she had been more competent to deal with it: the conjugal impassivity of her husband, which lasted seven years. At the end of four, he had got no further than coldly kissing her. And no one seemed to care—except Maria-Theresa, anxious and mortified at Vienna. At last, in 1774, when the Emperor Joseph II. of Austria was going to France, Maria-Theresa begged him to intervene: since the Bourbons would not reproduce themselves for love of France, they must be forced to do so for love of Austria. And Joseph intervened successfully, but not until 1777 (for his journey had to be put off), when Louis XVI. had been King for three years!

This is the very heart of Marie-Antoinette's story. Her husband refused her the mere formalities of a Royal marriage: there was nothing to attach her to France, and the Austrian party at Court seized the young, stubborn, frivolous creature as their prey. *She must remain Austrian*; she must create a foreign party at Court. Choiseul helped in that—went one better even than Mercy, for Choiseul encouraged her in her opposition to Madame Du Barry. Not so Mercy and Maria-Theresa, who were

all for a becoming ignorance of the favourite's functions. "You are not supposed to know"; and indeed she had not known at first. . . . Inevitable that Marie-Antoinette, every day more humiliated, should detest this Queen of Vice, flaunting it in the Palace, the King her slave, the courtiers her creatures—while the Dauphiness of France languished in her apartments, the bye-word of all those sniggering corridors! "The more she was told to be nice to *la* Du Barry, the more she snubbed her." How could it have been otherwise?

She *was* naughty, though—and in such amazing ways! She would not wear corsets, she would appear even at functions in a costume that looked like a *déshabillé*; and she was not too careful of the smaller matters of the law, such as the brushing of teeth, for example. It was difficult to induce the Dauphiness of France to brush her teeth regularly! And she would continue wearing her frilled and lace-trimmed petticoats long after their edges were smirched. . . . Again—the obvious explanation: that intolerable slight from her husband. He was "*lourd et comme abruti.*" Vigorous and virile enough to look at, and with plenty of opportunity for gallantries, he had hitherto cared and now continued to care for nothing but hunting and masonry. "He never opened his mouth except to put something in it," and sometimes he put too much in it. Her letters to Maria-Theresa at this earliest period have an odd kind of pathos, with their grave little bulletins of the husband's indigestions, and the accounts of her precautions against them. Doubtless there was a contemptuous twitch of the lips as she penned the uninviting details; and, in the laugh with which she dismissed the topic for something more amusing, we seem to hear, along the ages, a ring which has all the clearness of its irony. . . .

Thus, till 1773. With 1773, modifications. She grows more regal, more serious; more fastidious, more adaptable. The King does not bore her so much as at first—or rather, she has learnt that lesson, the flower of Court-training: to accept boredom as an essential part of life. She has even spoken to Du Barry—"flung three words at her head"—and Du Barry has been disproportionately grateful. Over her husband, she is acquiring influence; she has taught him to speak, to smile, to dance. Gradually she

comes to dominate him entirely. Mercy-Argenteau rubs his hands—subtly flatters the girl by showing her what her power may be, and, more subtly still, provides her with an opportunity for using what she already has. He advises her to express a wish to visit Paris. (Mercy thinks it is high time for Paris to see its Dauphiness, three years married now.) She gets her way: an Entry is arranged for June 8, 1773. And what a success! Paris, in its inimitable fashion, goes wild about its Dauphiness. "A little smiling Princess, so full of vitality!" An artist places her portrait in the heart of a full-blown rose. . . . She is the Star of France: "*La Dauphine est si belle, la Dauphine est si bonne.*" Nothing is too good to say about her. Paris is in transports. But at Versailles, they are biting their lips. There are attempts to influence the King against her. They fail. Then the Comte de Provence tries an imitation of the famous Entry: but the people have humour if he has none—*his* Entry is a gruesome failure.

Well, it was her great moment; she might have changed the destiny of France. If then she had been wise, if then she had *seen*, had persuaded Louis XV., also to come to Paris . . . who knows how much might have been different? But she was only eighteen, and she was an unmarried wife: there was nothing to give her insight. She behaved like the giddy girl she was. "Her heart swelled at her triumph, but her ideas did not." She caught at the Paris hearts, and forgot the Versailles enmities. It was all Paris now: she was there incessantly—frivolously, foolishly. Mercy lost hope again. "She can comprehend affairs with extreme facility, but she is very much averse from them. . . . If she does not govern the Dauphin, some one else will." But Maria-Theresa had a divided mind: dreading unpopularity, she did not desire her daughter to have too great an influence in politics—and her daughter was in full agreement. "There never existed a Princess who manifested a more marked aversion for all serious studies." She knew nothing of history, of art, of literature; she was so desperately ignorant that her enemies said she was deficient in sense. No one could persuade her to read; she was as indolent as a cat, except when it was a question of amusement.

In April, 1774, Louis XV. fell ill; he lay dying for nearly a fortnight. "All the world was getting impatient *que cela finît*; that poor Louis would have done with it. It is now the 10th of May, 1774. He will soon have done now. . . . Hark! across the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, what sound is that—sound 'terrible and absolutely like thunder'? It is the sound of the whole Court, rushing to salute the new Sovereigns. . . . The Dauphin and Dauphiness are King and Queen! They fall on their knees together and with streaming tears exclaim, 'O God, guide us, protect us; we are too young to reign!'—Too young indeed." *

"*The Austrian is on the Throne!* . . . This," says Avenel, a violently Republican writer, "is the Prologue of the great drama which is soon to begin, when Paris will march upon Versailles to win back France for the French." Hostile as he is, there is insight here. She cared hardly at all for affairs, yet after her accession she interfered in them perpetually, and her interference was so ill-judged yet so all-powerful, that Mercy and Maria-Theresa were in despair. She obtained the recall of Choiseul—and laughed at her husband for yielding to her. "*J'ai si bien fait que le pauvre homme m'a arrangé lui-même l'heure la plus commode!*" Maria-Theresa was overwhelmed. "'*The poor man!*' What an expression! She is rushing headlong to her ruin." But at this moment, her popularity was at its height: she reigned over the King, Paris, the Court, the Ministers. Her dazzling success obliterated her follies—for she was still dissipated, egotistic, obstinate.

How did she contrive to lose the people's hearts? It was a crowd of little things: she was tactless first, rebellious next, insolent at last. It was favouritism: the Princesse de Lamballe, the Comtesse de Polignac; it was insensate dissipation, gambling—her *jeu d'enfer!* . . . "The Royal orgy flowed all over Paris." She went to every Opera-Ball and stayed till six in the morning; four hours later, you found her at the Races, congratulating the successful jockeys, whom the Comte d'Artois presented to her. . . . She had an attack of measles, and four cavaliers for nurses. The King was solicitously guarded from risk by total exclusion. . . . Then there were the nasty books—so numerous at that time—

* Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Vol. I. chap. IV.

with which her room was swarming: "her brother Joseph spoke of the indecencies with which she had filled her mind." There were her diamonds, her feathers, her dress: "the Queen will be the ruin of all the French ladies!" Every morning, the First Lady-in-Waiting brought a book containing patterns of all her countless gowns, and the Queen stuck a pin into those she meant to wear.* Madame Bertin, the great modiste of the moment—the Bertin who spoke of "my negociations with the Queen"—could obtain an audience when Mercy could not. . . . Mercy gave up hope. She would not listen to any serious talk of affairs: "*C'est bon! mais avant tout, il faut s'amuser.*" Maria-Theresa, too, lost heart: here was a daughter who forgot her mother's birthday, who would send her mother unfinished letters, even unsigned ones, but could send finished ones, signed ones, to all her absent favourites. She was beyond control; her popularity was no longer in question, no such thing as her popularity any longer existed—and when the time came for clearer vision, all was irremediable. Her first child was born in 1777—a daughter. Too late! Not wifehood nor motherhood it was which could change her then: so merciless indeed was destiny. . . . A few years after the daughter's birth, she went again to Paris. "Silence received her; indifference accompanied her": she came back in tears, asking *What have I done to them?* And then, 1785–6, "that unutterable business of the Diamond Necklace."† Unutterable, truly! "The Largest Lie of the Eighteenth Century, it comes to us borne upon an illimitable dim Chaos of Lies"†—which to examine closely here were to abandon all else in her history. To the clear vision of Goethe it presaged the coming Revolution; Talleyrand wrote, "Pay attention to this wretched Necklace-affair; I should not be in the least surprised if it overturned the throne." She had nothing to do with it, knew not of its existence till it had almost

* The National Archives possesses a curious volume: *Mme. la Comtesse d'Ossun, Garde-robe des Atours de la Reine: Gazette pour l'année* 1782. The patterns are fastened by wafers to the paper: delicious bright light colours! Old-rose with wide black stripes, and immense spots of cream-colour, flecked with green: grey, with white and emerald flecks all over it. . . . And the names of the dressmakers printed above! A page is reproduced in the Goncourts' *Histoire de Marie-Antoinette.* (*Edition de luxe*, 1878.)

† Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Vol. I.

exploded; fouler calumny never fell on woman's head—yet, looking with eyes that are not French, that are neither Royalist nor Republican, we sadly see that though of the hideous issue she was innocent, she had herself prepared the ground for it. The calumny was foul, but there are Queens upon whom it could never have fallen. Those insane night-promenades at Versailles, "in simple muslin gown, straw hat, thick veil," where she mingled with the populace, was spoken to by young soldiers seated beside her on the common garden-bench—they all unwitting mostly, but once, alas! not unwitting. . . . *Cette reine qui se sauvait de son trône!* murmur the Royalist Goncourts adoringly—but Queens may not run away from their thrones: Queens must pay, as others pay. Even Madame Campan allows that the night-promenades most possibly prompted that incident in the Necklace-Plot, when the Queen of France was personated by "a Parisian unfortunate-female" in the Hornbeam-Arbour at Trianon!

"Calumny!" cry the Goncourts: "when, since 1774, had calumny been silent for an instant about her! Calumny was everywhere"—she could not breathe without inhaling it; and after the Necklace-affair, popular hatred increased until "it was a frenzy." Songs and pasquinades were thick as carrion-flies: in one list the compiler observes, "The titles of many pieces have not been given: decency forbade it." Dramas were staged, of which the same writer says that one day nobody will believe that such things could be represented. In 1787, the feeling was such that her portrait was not exhibited at the Louvre lest the mob should outrage it. "She has known France and the French but to betray and despoil them; with her own hands, she could squander all the gold in the universe. There is not a crime that she is not intimately acquainted with." *The Austrian Wolf*: *the Tigress of Austria*: those were the names she had, she who once had been the Star of France! Nothing was too bad to say about her now.

She had her Dauphin by this time. He was born in 1785, before the scandal—the little boy whom such unspeakable things awaited. . . . In 1786, when the Necklace-Trial was over, she gave up Paris, theatres, toilettes, every pleasure, and retired to

Trianon with her tears—her "first tears of unmixed wretchedness." The first, but not the last. Hardly now did a day pass without them—until the days came when anguish was beyond such relief.

And her husband? "Poor Queen's husband, who means well, had he any fixed meaning!" He made his maps and his keys—kept his hunting-diary, writing in it "Nothing" on the days he did not hunt. Her satirical brilliant brother summed him up in a phrase. "The Fiat Lux had never sounded for him—*la matière était encore en globe.*" The same observer said of her that she was "actually austere—by character rather than by conviction." Had she lovers, a lover? She had one lover, as we think—against the opinion of many historians. He was the young Count Axel de Fersen, a Swedish gentleman attached to the Court of France. It was the romance of her life—the undying memory of his. He was the true knightly lover: gentle, very cultured, handsome, "with a look of audacious tenderness," brave, utterly devoted. He never forgot her, he died adoring her, raging still against the "hellish monsters" who had done her to death. He was done to death himself at Stockholm in 1810, on the Twentieth of June—anniversary of the Flight to Varennes! "The star of this love lights her life with a gentle radiance." . . . Are we not glad of Axel de Fersen? Surely woman never needed knightly lover more.

Nothing now can avail us any longer; we are come to the evil days indeed. Her last walk in the darling Trianon, on the afternoon of the 5th of October; and then, the awful night! The night when Insurrection surges in upon them in their sleep, when "she flies for her life across the Œil-de-Bœuf . . . the battering of insurrectionary axes audible"; the night of cries, *Le Roi à Paris!*—the night when she steps out on the balcony with her children, and the voices yell, *No children!* and she puts them back and stands, her hands crossed on her breast, the proud head high—and the mob is momentarily stirred and shouts the last Vivat that she ever heard.

Next day, they go to Paris: *Le boulanger, la boulangère, et le*

petit mitron. "The Queen, dry-eyed, dumb, immobile, defied the insults as she had defied death the night before. 'I'm hungry!' said the Dauphin, sitting on her lap: *then the Queen wept.*" To Paris—to prison: the Tuileries, and, by permission, Saint-Cloud, that Palace so madly purchased in her name. And then, the fatality of Varennes on that night of June, 1791: pure fatality, no one, nothing, to blame—except that last fatality, Character. Even when they were discovered, even when they were taken . . . if Louis had but been a King! But no: Louis knew no heroism but patience—and "she was not great enough to succeed against such absolute incapacity and inertia." Back to Paris, accordingly, with Pétion and Barnave, emissaries of the National Assembly; back to prison at the Tuileries and to her daily, never-to-be-answered prayer: *Que le roi fasse quelque chose de grand.* Pitiable! "Alas! it was not *in* the poor phlegmatic man." . . . But she has Elizabeth with her now. Elizabeth is the man of the party; Elizabeth wants violent measures of any kind, wants to run all risks; "ready for martyrdom, but readier for fighting." . . . "I always observed in her a very deliberate kind of pride that seemed to have neither end nor object, that was roused without cause, and that nothing could conciliate." (Note by Daujon in his *Narrative.*) . . . Elizabeth is the world's darling!

A year after the Flight to Varennes, the mob burst into the Tuileries. A handful of rods was thrust in her face: *For Marie-Antoinette,* they held up toy guillotines, gallows with little dolls hanging, a plateful of bleeding flesh cut in the shape of a heart. . . . Finally, they crammed the Red Cap on her head and on the Dauphin's, amid the imprecations of the dreaded Poissonnières. She looked at them. "*I am French,*" she said; "*I was happy when you loved me.*" For an instant, with those words, the tumult died; the women remembered they were women. . . .

There is more noise next day, and the little Dauphin cries in terror, "Oh! Mamma, isn't yesterday over yet?" Yesterday is never to be over. They try to give her soothing-draughts. She refuses with a gleam of her old irony. "Nerves are only for fortunate women." In truth, all bodily ills had left her; her health was perfect, "as if to aid her spirit," which had borne, and

was bearing, and had yet to bear so much. She sometimes hoped still: the torment of hope still beset her. But "the King soon dispelled all illusions: it was enough to look at him"; and at last, so as not to shame him, she gave up trying, gave up hoping—and the Tenth of August came. She did, even then, try a little. He was ready to let his guards go: "Oh, sire, I implore you, keep them near you." No! he would let them go; he would "obey the Assembly." Then she knew that all was lost: *Je n'espère plus rien.* Nay! One more attempt before the end. They tell her that Paris is marching upon them, and she implores him not to go. "But there's nothing to be done here," he says—and goes. "First tell them to nail me to the walls of this palace!" she cries; but then she makes him the sacrifice of her last desire—and follows him: "this Queen who would have liked to die like a King!"

Real prisons then. First, Les Feuillants. While she was there, she bent her stately head one day to a couple of decent-looking men who were passing. They turned upon her. "Oh yes! You drop your damned condescending bobs of the head, do you? You won't have it long." That fair, high head! "She carried it magnificently. She might play at being a shepherdess, or a woman of fashion: once she stood up and moved onward, that haughty head irrevocably betrayed the Queen." The gaolers would smoke their pipes over it, would puff the smoke in her face as she passed by. She tried to stay indoors, but the children needed air—she faced it: quivering shuddering, she drank each insult to the dregs.

In 1793, the King's Trial and Death. She flashed out once. Passing some National Guards, she cried, passionately turning upon them: *Vous êtes tous des scélérats.* But upon her cry there broke the voice of her little son: "Let me pass! I am going to ask the people not to kill *papa roi.*" Her little son! Let us not speak nor think of what was done with him: the unspeakable, unthinkable. . . . They took him from her. Had that been all!

Her look at the crowd, at her judges, during the hideous mockery that was called her Trial—how one is glad of that look! "*Vois-tu, comme elle est fière,*" the common women whispered, and demanded, over and over again, that she should stand up that

MARIE ANTOINETTE

From an Old Print

they might feast upon her agony. "Will they never be weary of my weariness?" she asked, as half-fainting, she rose for the twentieth time. . . .

Once more let *us* look at her, though we indeed are loth to gaze. She is going to her death on that Sixteenth of October, 1793. As she left her cell at the Conciergerie, she knocked her head—you remember that she carried it magnificently?—against the top of the door. "Are you hurt, madame?" "Nothing can hurt me now." Nothing indeed: behold the face! All colour gone from the eyes, all light; the lids are reddened, the lashes are scanty and stiff from many tears; agony has pinched those nostrils "which once quivered with young pulsing life," the lips are set and fallen, the smile gone from them long since for ever. . . . She mounts the common, muddied cart. One plank for seat, no straw on the floor: "a strong white horse"—a white horse brings bad luck! She is in a common piqué wrapper; her arms are tied behind her; Sanson walks behind, "holding the end of the cord." They tell her to sit with her back to the horses; Sanson and his assistant bare their heads—"the only decent men that day."

She is very pale, but her head is still high. She looks indifferently at the crowd, till at a street-corner a woman makes a baby kiss its hand to her—and then the face is stirred for a second: "it was the only time she was afraid she might weep." . . . The people were silent at first; the cart went very slowly—"she drank death in a long draught." But soon the voices broke out: obscenities, imprecations—she did not hear. The cart stopped before Saint-Roch; a man, caracoling round it on his horse, brandished his sword and shouted: *La voilà, l'infâme Antoinette! Elle est f . . ., mes amis!* His name is known; "he was an actor."

It is twelve o'clock. She gives one look at the Tuileries: if she could turn paler, she turns paler now. . . . She mounts the scaffold. The haughty head is low enough, is it not? It lies upon the block. It will be lower still before they are satisfied: *vois-tu, comme elle est fière!*

And yet now, once more, how high it is—in Sanson's hands.

Vive la République! they cry, and the gendarme Mingault dips his handkerchief in the Blood of Austria.

MARIE-CAROLINE

"SON ALTESSE ROYALE MADAME"

DUCHESSE DE BERRY

1798–1870

AMAZON she has been called. But there is only one word which truly describes her, and that is Woman. She was the quintessence of woman—so typical, indeed, as to seem almost mythical. The wildfire courage, the reckless squandering of herself "*because I promised*," the faith, the hope, the blind optimism; the volatility, unreason, stubbornness; the intuition, sagacity, and folly, the patience, endurance—impatience, weakness . . . these in themselves would suffice, but the supreme instance has yet to be shown. Her secret marriage! We know of nothing in history which so reveals "the dreadful heart of woman." She believed, and France believed for much longer than she did, that her son—*L'Enfant du Miracle!*—was all in all to her; that that son should be King one day, the very meaning, as it were, of her life. . . . And before Vendée, before Nantes, before Blaye—Marie-Caroline knew in her heart of hearts that, mother though she were, she was passionate woman too; that "*if they knew*" they would no longer trust her, for dynastic things had crumbled into dust before personal things—that Love, in a word, was once more Lord of all; and that she, vehemently fighting for her son's restoration, was all the while no longer a subject of France, and could by no possibility be its Regent! . . . If in this she were blameworthy—and the Legitimists did think they had been badly treated—she had her punishment quickly. To be imprisoned at Blaye, when she was "no longer French," to bring forth as publicly as though her child were an

enfant de France . . . and all the while, to be married for love to a great Italian noble—this was bitter, this was to expiate indeed her two crimes of falling short, and of keeping secret.

But let us see how it all came about.

"She was the daughter, sister, niece, and mother of Kings!" cries a Legitimist, in his passionate defence of her. Her father was Francis I., King of the Two Sicilies; her mother, the Archduchess Clementine, daughter of the Emperor Leopold. Her grandfather had married the sister of Marie-Antoinette. Born on November 5th, 1798, Marie-Caroline was married at eighteen-and-a-half (June 17, 1816) to the Duc de Berry, second son of the Comte d'Artois (afterwards Charles X.). Louis XVIII., Artois' brother, was on the French throne then for the second time. Those whirling years! First, the Monarchy restored after Moscow, in 1814; next, the escape from Elba, "*Vive l'Empereur!*", Bourbons a-flight, and the Hundred Days. . . . And then—Waterloo, and Napoleon gone for ever, and the Bourbon once again on the tossed throne!

Louis XVIII. was seated there, but Artois, his brother, was more Royalist than Royalty. His sons, the Dukes of Angoulême and Berry, were "Ultras" too; but Angoulême scarcely counted, for he had no heir. In Berry lay the one hope of the elder Bourbon line. His young wife, too, was the most popular personage at Court. She was gay and frank and sweet, not pretty. *Je ne suis pas jolie: je suis pire*, as a witty actress said. A tiny, exquisite creature she was, with silver-gold hair—the Du Barry hair!—so faintly tinted that in childhood it had been almost white. "I was an albino till I was twenty-three," she said of herself; and she had another trait of the albino—the large, prominent, weak eyes, easily inflamed: "she often suffered from it." The eyes were short-sighted too, and had a slight cast, "a vague uncertain regard"—that obliquity of vision which is so frequently charming, and, to judge by her pictures, certainly seems to have been charming in her. The *lorgnon* was a prominent part of her equipment: the exquisitely-dressed head would poke and peer most daintily, and then the glasses would go up. . . . She had a

slightly open mouth—another precarious charm, which may or may not "come off"! Certainly the catalogue is full of *errata*: she would seem to have had no passable feature, except the "mythological hair," the perfect complexion, *blanche, blonde, et rose*, the ravishing arms, hands, and feet. But a delicious little person, somehow, and the most natural, spontaneous, simple Princess that ever teased a gloomy Court into animation—a Court dominated hitherto by the presence of that Priestess of Sorrow, daughter of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette, sister of the ill-fated little Louis XVII.—who never was Louis XVII. at all except in the loyal hearts and prayers of Royalists. That daughter, that sister, was now Duchesse d'Angoulême—childless, devout, austere. They did not love one another too dearly, she and Marie-Caroline! There was never any open breach—our little Duchess was too sweet for that, and the other Duchess too excellent; but there were disapprovals, grave looks perhaps . . . and shrugged white shoulders, and a naughty *lorgnon* that refused to see the looks! For Marie-Caroline came from the gay land of Naples, out of the gayest Court in Europe. Her grandfather, Ferdinand, had been an Eccentric. Etiquette he had refused to learn; good-humour, familiarity, even to loss of dignity, had been his method, and she had inherited his horror for all that was "stiff and pretentious." She loved to laugh—and she was not fastidious as to what she laughed at. "She mixed the *sel gaulois* with her own Neapolitan gaiety"—as good Doctor Ménière was delightedly to discover in the bitter yet amusing days at Blaye! Their conversations there, with a great Parisian accoucheur sitting by and contributing "*des friandises*," were sufficient to drive every other woman from the room. Well! that was her way. Such things unfailingly amused her. When she was almost scorching to death in the chimney hiding-place at Nantes—the tears of pain dried instantly on her cheek by the flaming air, her dress catching fire every minute against the iron plate of the stove . . . she still would fall into helpless fits of silent mirth at the "rough and ready conversation" of the two unconscious gendarmes, makers of the blaze that was threatening to kill her. It is written in her face, we think—that humour: such types are the born hearers of

THE DUCHESS OF BERRI

MARIE CAROLINE

From an Old Print

whispered stories, secrets of the alcove, "*friandises*" of famed accoucheurs!

And, whatever happened, in those early days she must be amused. Apparently the marriage was a successful one; at any rate, her husband adored her. He was a big ruddy fellow, not tall yet somehow "immense," with a great bull-head, huge bright blue eyes, thick lips; very pleasant, kind, and generous. For a Royal alliance, all seems to have been wonderfully well. Marie-Caroline was then entirely frivolous, but she had every charm; he would look on in delight at her "little ways," her perpetual, exquisite blush (rare charm in a Princess!), her naïveté and spontaneity—"she had not the grand air and did not try to have it"; he would listen to her pretty amateurish singing and piano-playing; would laugh at her crazes, her for ever begun and never finished bits of work, the stocking that someone else had invariably to complete! Just the sweet unaccountable kind of creature he most admired—as such men usually do: all grace and fire and sublime good sense and adorable folly. The Duchesse d'Angoulême frowned in vain for Berry: whatever Marie did was right! . . . She had borne him two sons, but both died in infancy; then a daughter came; and then, in 1820—the assassination of her husband outside the Opera-House on February 13! They had gone together to a gala-performance, and she, growing weary, wished to leave before the piece was over. He came down with her, intending to return to the Opera, had helped her into the carriage and was turning away, when Louvel's knife pricked him. It seemed nothing at first . . . but soon he sank in a bleeding heap to the ground, calling to his wife to help him —she was out of the carriage in a breath, bending over him, her gown instantly crimsoned . . . They got him to the Palace; there he died with the new day, imploring Louis XVIII. to have mercy on his assassin. It was his last request, almost his last word—the big, generous-hearted fellow!

Marie-Caroline was *enceinte* at this awful hour. On September 29th of the same year, her son Henri was born. the Child of Miracle, the Child of Europe, as he came to be called—that little Duc de Bordeaux for whom she dared and suffered so much;

the delightful child who, when his loved tutor, the Duc de Rivière, was ill, arranged with his sister that until he was better they would play only the games they did not enjoy—and, the good news of improvement arriving, ran into the salon, crying, "He's better! General Illumination!" and lit up, at noon, the whole array of wax candles! The mother of such a child is proclaimed a charming, a happy-natured woman, by that alone; for indeed the little boy had every sweetness. He was playing horses with his sister when his tutor (now the Baron de Damas, for the loved Duc de Rivière was dead) entered, bowed low, and said the one word *Sire!* Little Henri stopped whipping his horse and stared. "I am ordered," went on Damas, "to tell you that the King, your august grandfather, having failed to make France happy, despite his heartfelt desire to do so, has just abdicated. You are now to be King, under the title of Henri V." The little coachman got down from his high chair. Standing in front of Damas, he said, "Good papa, who is so kind and good, has failed to make France happy—and they want to make *me* King! How silly!" then, shrugging, "M. le Baron, it's impossible—what you tell me." . . . And he caught up his whip again, "Come on, sister, let's play!"—while the silenced Baron left the Royal presence.

This was at Rambouillet, in the evil days of August, 1830. His mother wanted to take him to Paris, present him to the Chambers, to the People, to the Army. . . . She would be Regent: yes, it was her right, and was she not popular? Had not Vendée and Bretagne acclaimed her in 1828, when she made that triumphant progress through the Loyal Lands? It had been almost idolatry. Oh, let her go with little Henri to Paris, and all would yet be well. A child of nine, all innocent, and she, the worshipped mother of the *Enfant de l'Europe!* . . . She would go, she must go. The carriage was ordered, was waiting in the courtyard—it waited until seven o'clock in the evening. Then she went, weeping, to countermand the order. The abdicated King was King still, alas! at home; Charles X. would not let her go. "Henri V.'s mother was crying"—and her tears were justified. Nettement says, "All depended on their being present. . . . Fortune is like men—she condemns the absent."

Scarcely an historian differs from Nettement here. If she had gone—if she had been allowed to go! Charles won his game of whist that night at Rambouillet, and the Bourbons lost the throne of France for ever. For the Usurper was ready: the Palais-Royal was to win against the Tuileries. All the world knows of Louis-Philippe's perfidy: how he promised Charles to proclaim himself the Protector of the Duc de Bordeaux, and how he proclaimed only the abdication of Charles, and passed over Henri V. as if he had never been born.

Exile then for Charles and Henri and Marie-Caroline: exile from Paris, from the Tuileries—and from her darling Rosny, the old castle that had been Sully's. She loved Rosny more than any place in the world, she loved Paris, she loved France. . . . And now it is the frowning English, the dour Scotch, dreary, dreary Holyrood! The Royal Family of France had a terrible reception in England. Louis Blanc,—that chivalrous Red Republican—has left a poignant description: how hats were kept on and arms defiantly crossed in the presence of the old King, how insults were so rife that access to the ship had to be forbidden. . . . It is sad to read this of England—who had sent a dispossessed King to France in her own evil days, and had known such chivalrous, such lovely graces at St. Germain! Did not the French King come to the foot of the Grand Staircase to receive the English James? and here was Charles greeted by a growling gate-keeper. Did not Louis XIV. offer the fallen Stuart a casket full of gold . . . what did the fallen Bourbon find upon his table? "Bills and threats of arrest only; nor did the sentinel present arms to the old man who had been a King."

How Marie-Caroline's heart must have surged with anger! If they had been kind—was not the sweetest gratitude waiting from the most gracious little Princess in the world? Cordial, happy-natured, joyous; light, free-spoken, foolish—but so ready to be loved, to love . . . and Holyrood only frowned; Holyrood only froze—oh, froze! "This terrible climate:" the grey sky, the grey life, the mortal *ennui*. . . . Marie-Caroline fled in 1831! Back to Italy—to the sweet air, blue sky, warm hearts, to plot and

plan too for the Child of Miracle: "I can't give up hope." . . . Our Royal Family at Holyrood are not encouraging. Charles passive, the Dauphin and Dauphiness—she who had been Duchesse d'Angoulême—actually hostile; but we will go! We go to Massa in the Duchy of Modena first: has not its King been alone in Europe in refusing to recognise the usurper? And after Massa, Naples; and after Naples, Rome. . . . Whom do we meet in Rome? Whom but the Count Lucchesi-Palli, "a charming, handsome cavalier!" We used to know one another when we were children—perhaps we had never quite forgotten one another. He is so handsome—tall, dark, "English-looking" (did that please?), and frank, gay, devoted. . . . And Holyrood had been so drear, and *they* had been so gloomy, and we love to laugh, we love to love. We are young, "not pretty, but worse," warm-hearted, eager for joy. . . . But oh, we are the mother of the "Child of Europe," and we are come to spread insurrection in France! Vendée is ready, Brittany is ready: do we not get letters, passionately summoning us thither, every day of our lives? And we must go *ourself*, for we will not have our son set on his throne by strangers. France shall not be invaded (and she had wonderful insight; she saw, alone almost in her time, that if things went on as they were going, France would one day be invaded—as France was); Civil war is better than Foreign war. "If my son should have to buy the throne of France at the price of one province, one town, one fortress, one house, one cottage—I give you my word, as Regent and Mother, that he shall never be King!"

Yes: Vendée and Brittany and we are ready—but this Lucchesi is ready too, this Lucchesi is eager, is importunate; and our heart is deeply stirred. What shall we do? Son or Lover—oh, we are torn both ways! But can we not have it both ways? Will not Lucchesi consent to a secret marriage? . . . Lucchesi consented. On December 13th or 14th, they were married secretly in Rome.

Not one of her suite knew it, then or afterwards—until all the world knew it. The reasons were pressing. All claim to the Regency must instantly go, if she were known to be married—and now that the agitation and the tempest of feeling were over,

now that she was his wife, she was ready to be her son's mother again. . . . *She* had got it both ways, but France was to have it in only one! She has been much blamed. Her Legitimists bit their lips in poignant anger. The anti-climax of it! There came a letter to Doctor Ménière from Paris during the Blaye period: "Even if she had had her baby in the public square, she ought to have denied having had it." *La chute grotesque de ce général en jupons*! . . . Did we not say right? Was she not Very Woman?

The beginning of 1832 found her desperately busy and excited. Her honeymoon was going on, but in her letters she had to pretend to be idle, bored, absorbed in waiting for the moment when something might be done. One ponders on Lucchesi's state of mind! Was he philosophical, or ambitious, or merely "frank and gay"? . . . Whatever he was, he now temporarily disappears from the story—and, ironically enough, as he disappears, Madame's real story begins: Vendée, Nantes, and Blaye.

Vendée first; the *Prise d'Armes*. She was urged incessantly by the Legitimists: "There's no time to lose. Success is inevitable—make haste! La Vendée is calling. Every day of delay is a theft from your son's heritage." . . . Those were the sort of letters she got, and she was ardent, brave, and faithful, and she thought that she might save France from a European war. She decided on a general taking-up of arms in the Loyal Lands. On April 25th, 1832, she left Italy for Marseilles. St. Polycarp's Day! by all Italians regarded as unlucky. . . . She was disquieted, but she tried to be of good cheer. At ten o'clock at night she left her house, leaning on her faithful Brissac's arm, and went down to the shore on foot, waiting for the vessel. It did not come for three hours; she slept on the sand, wrapped in her cloak—then the vessel came, and she embarked for it in a fisherman's boat. "Your heart would have thrilled with admiration if you had seen her!" wrote the Vicomtesse de Saint-Priest, who was with her. "'God is on our side,' said she. 'See what splendid weather—the wind blows for France!'" She landed at Marseilles, disguised as a Neapolitan sailor; the ship was rolling in a heavy sea, the boat that was to take them off was nearly

sucked under. Madame jumped down into it! The sailors were enchanted, and set off eagerly for land. It was very dark; they missed their point—they took her to the most dangerous part of the coast, the "Carry" Cliffs, which robust smugglers could hardly climb, and thus, leaping from boulder to boulder, soaked with sea-water, the Duchesse de Berry returned to France!

But she was "calm, happy, almost gay," as they trudged through the difficult country, and reached at last the game-keeper's hut, where she was to pass the night. The next day, letters came, encouraging, ardent letters: *Marseilles will move to-morrow* . . . but the to-morrows lasted until the 30th, and then three fugitive Legitimists arrived with a message: *The movement has failed; you must leave France.* "Leave France!" cried she; "no, no! but we must leave *here!*" . . . Did she again recall and shudder at the fabled ill-luck of St. Polycarp?

Now for La Vendée! They set out, walking; once more the way is lost; once more she goes to sleep on the ground. At Toulouse, what do they hear? "Vendée is full of troops; *our* country is faithful, well-disposed. Let Madame stay at Toulouse!" No: she will go to Vendée. She signs the order for the *Prise d'Armes*: it is to be on the 24th. She was at Plassac, near Blaye, when she did that. There she took on, as attendant—"so as to have a woman with me"—Eulalie de Kersabiec, thenceforth to be known as Petit-Paul, as she herself was Petit-Pierre. Poor Eulalie! who was not at all the Amazon, who did not even know how to ride—but learned there and then, so as to accompany Madame! Both wore men's garments: Marie-Caroline was dressed as a countrified-looking *bourgeois*, with a brown wig. . . . Well, and when they got to Vendée? It was hiding in farm after farm; it was sleeping in barns—and sleeping well; it was eating black bread, drinking cabbage-soup straight out of the iron pot, for there were no plates, and no special attentions might be shown to Petit-Pierre lest he be betrayed. . . . Nothing mattered: she was waiting, waiting, for the glorious Twenty-Fourth! . . . And all the while, at Nantes, "her men" were betraying her. Berryer, the great advocate, was sent from Paris to Nantes, and Berryer forced her adherent, Marshal de Bourmont, to sign that wicked countermand, which

put off, without her knowledge, the rising until June 3rd! . . . She did not know, and the five chiefs of the Vendée Movement came to her with long faces, saying that the people were not sufficiently armed, that Vendée swarmed with troops—"fifty thousand, they say." . . . And there were in reality but three thousand men in Vendée!

Berryer's countermand was flashing through the country; but they did not know that yet. . . . She stood arguing with them, "holding a chair by the back, stamping from time to time," the fair face deeply flushed: she would not be dissuaded. *I promised Vendée.* And when Berryer arrived, and she heard of the countermand? Her first thought was for the distant divisions. "They cannot hear in time." But then, she flew into a rage: "Oh, the lying craft that for ever surrounds us Royalties! Well, if I leave France, I'll never come back to it." But she would not leave: *I promised Vendée.* . . . And was Vendée true like her? Alas! "Vendée deserted Madame," says Sioc'han de Kersabiec, that flower of loyal chivalry. The five chiefs did not answer the call to arms. "Cowardice!" Kersabiec insists upon the word. . . . But the wretched countermand, as she had foreseen, had failed to reach the distant troops. On the 24th, some took the field, were utterly destroyed: "they fought, knowing they had been abandoned." But it was not her fault. Once again, "her men" had failed her. In 1830, Charles X., who would not let her go; in 1832, the men of Vendée, who would not let her fight.

And then, the escape to Nantes, the hiding there—from June to November in a garret, during that summer of blinding heat. . . . In November, the betrayal. Deutz, the "Jew of Colmar"—her trusted friend, given her by the Pope during that visit to Rome, Deutz, for whom Kersabiec can find but one parallel: the disciple who betrayed his Master. He came to Nantes under a feigned name; "but no one could see M. de Gonzague and not be sure he was a traitor." . . . The Kersabiecs, the Guinis, her *curé*, all have seen "M. de Gonzague," all try to dissuade her: no! she will see him, he has letters, they

may be vitally important. She sees him, recognises him: "*Mon ami!*" she cries. . . . "*He turned faint for a minute.*" She gave him a chair with her own hands—soon he "recovered himself." But still she might have been saved, for he had been brought to her by devious ways, and he had been made to think that *she* had come from far (they had put muddy shoes on her feet to feign the tired walker!) . . . and he went, and could no more find the place. But she asked to see him again! Again the friends dissuade her—again she persists. Oh, strange! superstitious as you are, Marie-Caroline—have you forgotten St. Polycarp's Day? And even if you have, did you not lose your little pin, "that brings you luck," quite lately? And even if you found it, have you not dreamed these last three nights of monkeys? *Rêver singe est très mauvais signe.* . . . and the third time—remember! the hideous ape caught your hair, dragged off your cap—think, think! "She was terribly agitated by the dream." *Yet she saw Deutz.* The day she saw him, in the very hour, came a letter in sympathetic ink, begging her to be on her guard: "A man in your confidence has sold you for a million to Thiers." She threw it down, laughing: "Perhaps it's you!" "Possibly," smiled Deutz. That night, somebody, going casually to the window, saw the flash of bayonets, coming to the house. . . . "*Sauvez-vous, Madame—sauvez-vous!*"

She rushed up to the garret: the chosen hiding-place was there. A space behind the fireplace—four feet wide, fourteen long, five feet high: one entered by creeping along the hearth. Luckily the door was open: that gained them time. First, (because it was a little higher at the further end) went the two men, Mesnard and Guibourg, then the Kersabiec sister, finally Madame. The door of the *cachette* closed just as the street-door opened. . . . Sixteen hours they were there. They would never have been found at all, if the gendarmes had not lit their famous blaze! Over and over again, Madame's dress caught fire against the white-hot iron plate. . . . She put it out with her hands. Then the smoke from newspapers piled upon the fire when it seemed about to die, came in and suffocated. It was certain death if they stayed: the death of rats in a hole. But all will stay, if Madame stays. She weeps with rage: the

tears are dried upon her cheeks by the blistering heat. . . . Then she gives the order to surrender. "We are going to open the door. Take down the fire!" And then, Son Altesse Royale Madame . . . creeps out on her hands and knees, her face blackened, her eyes seared, her hair singed—and they arrest her.

Blaye now—and the secret out at last! On February 26th, 1833, her confession of the secret marriage. "Forced by pressure of circumstance, and by the measures ordered by the Government, although I had the gravest motives for keeping my marriage secret, I now owe it to myself, as well as to my children, to declare that I was secretly married during my stay in Italy."

That letter to Louis-Philippe, which ought to have been kept a State-secret, was published in the *Moniteur* for all the world to read; and not one humiliation did it save her, not one infamy, not one word of scandal. . . . She was kept a prisoner at Blaye —that "frightfully cold" citadel on the right bank of the Gironde —from November 16th, 1832, to June 8th, 1833. "Unparalleled," cried Châteaubriand, "this torture inflicted on a helpless woman, utterly alone and unaided! Her own relatives" (Louis-Philippe was her uncle) "expose her to the derision of lackeys, hold her down while she brings forth publicly, calling upon all the servilities they can muster to look on . . . 'twas as if France were summoned to the birth of a King. Would the galleys yield us such another set of people?" The English Press was disgusted: "As purposeless as it is barbarous"; "One of the most revolting proceedings that the world has ever seen." . . . Poor good Dr. Ménière, who cheered her durance with his affection and his wit, was rallied by Soult: "I hear you're *au mieux* with Madame!"; innumerable fathers were suggested for the coming child; letters flew about: "Let her confess that at Caraca she forgot all in the arms of a painter"; and "No one but myself knows of her infamous conduct." . . .

Marie-Caroline, "daughter, sister, niece, and mother of Kings," brought forth a daughter on May 3rd, 1833. On June 7th, she was liberated. *Everybody must see her go*: that

was the order. And thus she went. Stared at, commented on—defeated! Defeated finally now. All was over. Was she glad, was she grieved? Perhaps indeed she was glad. "I think I've done enough for my son. I am weary of this restless life; I want repose, sunshine, and oblivion"—and, we hope, that handsome, patient cavalier, who was so "frank and gay"!

She lived happily till 1870, the year of that invasion which she had long ago foreseen. But they had not listened: when had a Bourbon ever listened? "She was so light," they said—they who learned nothing and forgot nothing! Berryer, the great advocate who betrayed her—for her own better safety, as he truly thought—had cried, after that interview before the Rising, when she "stood holding a chair and stamping her foot," and saying *I promised Vendée* . . . Berryer had cried, "She has head enough and heart enough for twenty kings!"

He might have found a better phrase, we think, considering what kings were then. We prefer our own—we are tenacious of our own. She was Very Woman!

PAULINE BORGHESE

1780–1825

ROSE-COLOUR! Directly one thinks of Pauline Borghese, the room—not the atmosphere—seems suffused with rose-colour. Atmosphere she had none, nor did she ever realise that, literally or metaphorically, such a thing existed. Her heaven was rose-colour, and the clouds were of tulle; *le bon Dieu* one cannot but imagine that she figured to herself as a Great Man-Milliner—greater even than the great Leroy. To be pretty was her sole ambition. She brilliantly achieved it—Leroy helping her!

She was born at Ajaccio, "*cette ville gâtée par la nature*," on October 20th, 1780. Her father, Charles Bonaparte, had fought with Paoli for the independence of his country when Corsica was bought from the Republic of Genoa. When Paoli was vanquished in 1769, Charles was allowed to return to Ajaccio, and there entered into close relations with M. de Marbeuf, who afterwards became Governor. Bonaparte's chief characteristic was want of energy; probably his warlike career was due to the influence of his wife, Letizia Ramolino, the *Madame Mère* of later days. She was a "solid character," frank, incapable of frivolity, illiterate, frenetically economical, exceedingly pretty—a true Corsican type. But though she has been much eulogised, she "fell in reality" (as Turquan remarks), "very far below her task of motherhood." She neglected her daughters: they ran wild "like little heather-ponies," they were never taught duty, self-respect, or virtue; and neither they nor her sons ever dreamed of consulting her about anything. *Madame Mère* was a dignified, handsome woman—that was all!

Stendhal says that it would have been far better for Napoleon if he had had no relations; and Napoleon himself declared, "My family have done me far more harm than I have been enabled to do them good. . . . Really, to hear them talk, one would think that I had wasted my father's substance!" "*Tout parti périt par les femmes*," remarks Michelet, "and the Imperial régime owes its destruction in part to the sisters of Napoleon." They were "crowned courtesans," all three. Pauline was the loveliest woman of her time, and probably the least virtuous. "It is impossible to form any idea of her beauty from her pictures." . . . "She was the loveliest woman I ever beheld." . . . "A veritable master-piece of creation." . . . Such are the testimonies of contemporaries.

At thirteen (1783), she left Corsica with her family to take refuge in Marseilles.* They lived, more or less on charity, in an old house in the "Old Town" quarter; the girls were wretchedly dressed, yet Pauline, already ravishing, instantly attracted attention. Her clothes were dreadful, but her eyes—"those eyes which she never had any notion of putting in her pocket"—were divine. She would rage against the villainous hats, the cheap disfiguring shoes—"if anyone had told her in those days that poverty is no crime, she would certainly have answered, like Rivarol, '*C'est bien pis*'!" Nevertheless, a serious lover had already appeared.

There were two remarkable young men in Marseilles just then, the Citizens Barras and Fréron, sent thither as Commissaries of the Convention. Through the brothers, these distinguished personages became acquainted with the Bonaparte girls, and visited them "unconventionally often." Fréron at once fell over head and ears in love with Pauline. He had a reputation for fire-eating and for fashion—ever an attractive combination; he had been a schoolfellow, and was still an intimate friend, of Robespierre; he had known Jean Paul Marat; he represented the Convention! It would have been stupid not to fall in love with Fréron, and she fell in love, or in something a little like it—something which produced letters with such postscripts as this:

* This was when Paoli, disgusted with the French Revolution, threw himself into the arms of England.

"*Ti amo sempre, e passionattissimamente, per sempre amo, 'sbell' idol mio, sei cuore mio, tenero amico, ti amo, amo, amo, si amatissimo amante.*" . . . "I swear, dear Stanislas, never to love anyone else."

"If she should break it, now!"

The affair with Fréron was permitted at first. But before he had made a formal request for Paulette's hand, a rival appeared —Junot, Napoleon's aide-de-camp. Junot lost no time in applying at head-quarters. One evening, he and Napoleon, who had left Marseilles for Paris, were walking in the Jardin des Plantes, and the lover seized the opportunity for confession. It was an exquisite evening; Napoleon was in good humour. He listened, he seemed touched by the young passion beside him, and while they strolled through the leafy alleys, this melting mood endured. But no sooner did they leave the Garden and feel the pavement under their feet, than his attitude altered. "You're too poor. You have nothing; she has nothing; what's the total? Nothing!" There was no answering that; and thus Junot got his dismissal.

It ought to have been all the better for Fréron, but times were changing. He no longer retained his post on the Paris journal; he was in debt—and Napoleon was growing daily more important. As if the lovers' evil star were set in heaven, scandal now began to have something to say about him—rumours that he was already married. Pauline was incredulous, but Napoleon and Josephine declared that the affair must end. Pauline struggled hard; she taunted her brother finally with snobbery. "*I* do not change with my circumstances." . . . He took no notice, and she tried tragedy. "*J'en mourrai, voilà tout.*" . . . But Lucien Bonaparte, Fréron's special friend, was soon obliged to tell him that all was lost—and Pauline did not die.

The family were then at Antibes, where Napoleon had taken a charming villa for them. They were better off; there were more distractions. The girls enjoyed themselves hugely, and when they went back to Marseilles, they kept the ball a-rolling. They organised private theatricals; a companion of those days, young de Ricard (afterwards the Général de Ricard of *Autour des Bonapartes*), has stories to tell of fun behind the scenes—that

accepted convention of amateur theatricals. "The Bonaparte girls used to dress us, in the fullest acceptation of the term, used to pull our ears, to slap us, but always kissed and made up afterwards. We used to stay in the girls' room all the time they were dressing." . . .

In 1797, Napoleon's victories in Italy were intoxicating France. He was the Man of the Hour; and, like a true Corsican, he instantly began to think of using the women of his family for the glory, consideration, and influence of the clan, so he proposed to one of his Generals, Marmont, that he should marry Pauline. But Marmont declined. "She is charming, exquisite; but I have dreams of domestic felicity, fidelity, and virtue—seldom realised, it is true; yet in the hope of attaining them——" he renounced this marriage! Pauline was then seventeen; and already it is clear that she left no doubt as to her tendencies. "As to a good reputation, there had never been any question of such a thing," says Turquan gaily, in his scandalous and amusing book.

The family were now at Milan.* Napoleon had gone there, during the armistice, to live in the Castle of Montebello, and had sent for his people to come and enjoy his new glories. Pauline, despite the Fréron struggle, was enchanted; she adored her brother, no matter what he did. The sisters-in-law had not met; nor was Pauline desirous to encounter Josephine—*that* intervention in her love-affair she would have been superhuman to forgive! But she perhaps anticipated some feline amusement; and at Milan, sure enough, she did prove very troublesome. Napoleon had frequently to bestow upon her "those awful glances which he employed to recall refractory soldiers to order." "They didn't recall her," continues Arnault,† "one moment afterwards she was just as bad again!" He gives us an amusing picture of her. "Extraordinary combination of the most faultless physical beauty, and the oddest moral laxity! She was as pretty as you please, but as unreasonable too. She had no more manners than a school-girl—she talked incoherently, giggled at

* 1797. Marie-Anne (Elise) was married by this time; so only Paulette and Annunziata (Caroline) went with Madame Bonaparte.

† *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire.*

everything and nothing, imitated the most serious personages, put out her tongue at her sister-in-law behind her back, nudged me with her knee when I didn't happen to be attending to her. . . . She was a good child, naturally rather than voluntarily, for she had no principles. She was capable of doing good, but chiefly from caprice."

There was nothing impossible that she did not do at Milan. She listened at key-holes and "found out things" about Josephine, she flirted with the officers of her brother's staff. . . . Some say that it was in one of her incursions into the official bureaux that her marriage with General Leclerc was arranged. Napoleon overheard him making too-violent love to her—" and the marriage was celebrated without losing an instant!" This version comes from the very unreliable Monnier MSS.—it is probably false; but there is no doubt that Pauline's marriage was very hastily arranged. General Leclerc was twenty-six; rich, gentle, and benevolent-looking, of middle height and frail constitution, "with a grave manner." It does not sound promising! Yet it turned out not so very ill. Leclerc was passionately in love, Pauline was amused with that quaint toy, a husband—and apparently the toy was of good mechanism; it made no unreasonable demands. In the Monnier MSS. it is related that at a little dinner in 1831, some stories were told about the Princess Pauline by M. de Sémonville.

"I was one of her lovers," he said; "there were five of us in the same house who shared her favours, before her departure for San Domingo. Among these was one Macdonald, for whom Pauline took a desperate fancy. For three days they were shut up together at Saint-Leu. They had some food with them, and during that time, they never opened the door to a living soul." . . . People remarked that Leclerc grew graver and graver. It was all he could do, no doubt—unless he had been able to laugh heartily. But love impairs the sense of humour; and the husband frowned perhaps instead of laughing, at such episodes as a visit to the wounded Junot at Milan. The invalid had been ordered to keep very quiet, so nothing could be more natural than that Pauline, Josephine, and Josephine's maid Louise should go in a body to pay him a visit. It was all the more a matter-of-course because, two years before, Junot had been madly

in love with Pauline; because Josephine had tried, later, to entangle him in a flirtation; and because he, too honourable to betray his master, had then feigned to be in love with the maid Louise!* Junot must have welcomed the trio with some perplexity. Difficult to know which pair of feminine eyes to avoid the most carefully! Picturesque, pale, half-a-hero, nevertheless, he lay there, "in a sort of dressing-gown of white piqué," and entertained his astonishing guests. They gossipped and chattered; Pauline showed her pretty teeth, Josephine, who had bad ones, hid hers. All seemed to be going gaily, when suddenly Junot fell back, his eyes closed. . . . He had displaced a bandage; the blood from his wound "was flowing through the sleeve as if through a gutter." He fainted away—and recovered, to find his orderly re-arranging the bandages and all three ladies attending to him, Paulette with stains of blood on her dress—frightened, but picturesquely brave. "This is the happiest moment of my life," gasped the gallant Junot.

If Leclerc did not shout with laughter at this, he must have been indeed too grave for any pretty lady to be faithful to.

Not long afterwards, at Milan, Pauline's first (and only) child was born—a son, called Dermide, name chosen by his godfather, Napoleon, who, as everyone knows, adored Ossian. She then went to Paris, where her closest friends were the Permon family. Madame Permon was beautiful and intriguing—her salon was more frequented by men than by women; "and more by 'men' than by husbands!". She was very kind, and had been notably so to the Bonaparte family.† Pauline went there a great deal. She was now in the full development of her beauty—"at the head of the squadron of pretty women of her time." Let us try to see her in detail. "Of medium height, with a marvellous pink-and-white complexion, sparkling eyes, black hair, Grecian profile, and such a perfectly-formed body that she sat as nude model to Canova for his *Venus Vincitrix*." . . . But lovely to look at was all she was. She was entirely without aspiration,

* Josephine had a singular whim of dressing this maid exactly like herself, and having her at table with her.

† Her daughter Laure in later life married Junot, and became Duchesse d'Abrantès—author of the well-known memoirs.

PAULINE BONAPARTE

(PRINCESSE BORGHESE)

From an Old Print

fine taste, moral qualities, virtue—and she had no intelligence to speak of. *Reine des colifichets*: that was her title—Queen of Gew-gaws. "Her diplomacy consisted in fixing the respective merits of almond-paste, rose-water-paste, and cucumber pommade." "A woman to the tips of her rosy finger-nails," remarks Arthur Lévy; and Masson: "She was so much the more *la femme* that with her the faults common to women reached their highest development, while her beauty attained a perfection which may justly be called unexampled."

These judgments are amusing in their complacent masculinity; but it is difficult to believe that in Pauline Borghese even the Frenchmen of that day could have discovered the Essential Woman. It is idle to discuss her character. "She knew nothing except *la mode*." Let us dress her up, then; let us "present" her, for instance, at Madame Permon's grand ball at the Rue Sainte-Croix. Everyone went to it. The *jeunesse dorée* of Paris sent the pick of their basket; among the dandies present were two future lovers of Pauline—Montbreton and Montrond. . . . She took the occasion very seriously. Not a syllable was breathed of what she was to wear; her milliner, her hairdresser, were sworn to secrecy. She asked her hostess to let her dress at Rue Sainte-Croix, so that she might appear absolutely fresh and uncrushed. The rooms were almost full when she entered. "*Ce fut un éblouissement!*" The music stopped for a moment. The air was murmurous with admiration. . . . How the little heart of the Queen of Gew-gaws must have stirred! Do not grudge her that joy—for nothing else in the world could have given it to her.

And the dress? "It was of Indian muslin, the finest procurable; the hem was bordered with gold palm-leaves, four or five fingers high; four bands, smooth, and spotted like a leopard's skin, were wound about her head and supported her hair. These in their turn supported little bunches of gold grapes. She had copied the coiffure of a Bacchante at the Louvre!" For ornaments she wore cameos everywhere; and "beneath her two little breasts, which seemed ready to escape like birds from their nest," she wore a band of dull gold, fastened by a magnificent engraved jewel. No gloves—her wrists, arms, and hands could

afford to be seen without them. "With her little infantine astonished look, and the slender breasts beneath the thin muslin —she was like (in expression, that is!) the *Jeune fille à la cruche cassée* of Greuze."

The other women were jealous—for Pauline could not render her victories popular. Murmurs of "adventuress" were heard, but the hostess hushed them up; and the ball, for a while, went on peaceably. But one lady had been grievously offended. This was Madame de Coutades, who had had a little court around her when Pauline came in, and had then been left suddenly quite alone. It was not to be endured; the lady watched her moment for revenge. Soon it came. Pauline had gone into a small boudoir and there was lying on a sofa, displaying her beauty, when in came Madame de Coutades. She put up her *lorgnon*. Pauline enjoyed it—for a minute or two. Then a little voice, silvery and compassionate, was heard.

"What a pity! She *would* be so lovely if it weren't for that."

"For what?" said the gentleman addressed.

"Don't you see? But it's so remarkable! One can't help seeing!"

The beauty on the sofa was certainly not enjoying this. Her colour began to mount, her eyes to grow troubled: what could be the matter? She listened with all——

"*Her ears!* If *I* had ears like that, I'd cut them off!"

Poor Pauline was quite naive in this hour of bitterness. She wept, she fainted—Madame de Coutades was revenged indeed. . . The ears were not so very bad. They were only flat, not delicately tinted, not the proverbial "rosy shell"—but from that moment nobody could think of anything else. Their owner left early. She had been wounded in the only vital part she had—her vanity; and the blow left its mark for ever. From that day she became less indulgent, less good-natured, more impatient—and she always did her hair low over her ears!

Of anecdotes like this, the story of her life is composed. Her dresses are more important than her lovers—she had an almost equal number of both; but the frocks were distinguished, and the men were not.

In 1800, Leclerc was made General of the Army which Napoleon sent to support Spain against Portugal. He lost his head completely, fancied himself a second "Petit Caporal," imitated the master in manner and even in dress—used to wear the long grey coat and the famous hat! He made no success in Portugal; and his brother-in-law then despatched him to San Domingo, to quell a negro-rising there. Pauline was ordered to accompany him. She struggled vainly; then, accepting her fate, proceeded to order "mountains of pretty clothes, pyramids of hats."

"There won't be room; they can't all go," said Leclerc, after the manner of husbands.

"Well, if *they* don't, *I* won't," answered Madame, after the manner of wives. Leclerc made room for them.

On the whole, it was not so bad. During the voyage she was surrounded by flatterers; there were two poets, who sang her charms in fluent verse, and poor dear old Fréron was there, going to the same place. . . . No doubt he came in for some consolation.

Leclerc was an inefficient commander; finally, things became so stormy that it was thought well for the ladies to leave the island. Pauline refused. "I will not embark except with my husband. I will die sooner. You other women can cry, if you want to. You are not like me—the sister of Bonaparte." Orders were sent by Leclerc to embark her by force if necessary; and it was not till force was used that she consented. They reached the place of embarkation—and just as they did so, an aide-de-camp came hurrying to say that the negroes had been defeated. "I knew I should not go on board!" cried triumphant Pauline. "And now we will return to the Residency." Sceptical Turquan believes not in these heroics, but they have taken their place in history. Perhaps she really declaimed them: certainly she adored Napoleon—her love for him is the one genuine thing in her life. *Sœur de Bonaparte*: she had just enough imagination to realise what that meant. The speeches need not ring quite true to be believed in.

In 1802, Leclerc fell ill, and died between the 1st and 2nd of November. Pauline never left his side, although she too was ill

—not with cholera, as he was, but with the consequences of her too-dissipated life beneath a tropical sun. After his death, she came back to France with the little Dermide and Leclerc's embalmed body! She had had a magnificent cedar-wood coffin made for "her mummy," as the Duchesse d'Abrantès called it; and she added to this tribute the still more striking one of cutting off all her hair, placing it on his head, and covering the whole with a hood. "A sacrifice to her dead husband!' Napoleon drily remarked when he heard of it. "She knows her hair must fall out after her illness, and will be longer and thicker for being cut short."

She was not at all pleased at leaving San Domingo. "Here, I reign like Josephine—I am the first lady in the land;" and Paris, in mourning, was not to her taste. She looked lovely, though she was still ailing; her widow's weeds were most becoming—but Napoleon kept a strict eye upon her. It was very dull! She amused herself by consulting a fortune-teller, who used to come to her very often *—a little untidy woman "with common expressions," whose method was to break the white of an egg into a bowl of water. This she would stir up with a knitting-needle, and according to the size and shape of the fragments that broke away, she interpreted the future. (Belief in this kind of thing ran in the family—witness Napoleon's famous Book of Fate.) White of egg is proverbially monotonous; Pauline soon announced that if she could not see her friends, she would commit suicide. It was *histoire de toilette* again, for she *had* been seeing lovers; but dress was in reality the ruling passion of her life.

Among the lovers were Lafont, an actor of the Théâtre Français; Colonel Jules Canouville, "one of those adorable scamps who are the darlings of all women," and Prince Camillo Borghese, lately come from Rome to Paris. He was good-looking in the taste of the period—had black whiskers and curly hair, was a superb whip, a fine dancer, good-natured, genial. . . . But he "walked absurdly," and—though this probably did not distress Pauline—he was an utter fool. His father had been one of the finest connoisseurs of his day; the

* To the Hôtel Marbeuf, Joseph's house.

Borghese Palace at Rome contained pictures, statues, art-treasures of every kind. The Borghese were immensely rich, but Camillo, "though extravagant for himself, was economical for others."

General Leclerc's widow and he pleased one another at first sight; they are said to have had intimate relations before marriage—relations of which Napoleon heard, and forthwith insisted upon the ceremony. Gossip had much to whisper: phrases were flying. . . . "*Se donner à Borghese était ne se donner à personne.*" . . . It was attributed to ambition on both sides when they were married in November, 1805.* Borghese wished to be connected with the First Consul; Pauline thought it would be charming to be a Princess, and to own the priceless Borghese diamonds. She could show them to Josephine! She did. It was one of the great events of her life.

For days she hesitated over her toilette. At last green velvet was decided on: it would show off the diamonds so well. The diamonds, poor things! were shown off with a vengeance: they were stuck on wherever there was anything for them to stick to—dress, head, neck, arms, hands: it was a veritable armour of diamonds. She looked in the glass and wept for joy. "If vanity and spite, fully gratified, can make a woman happy, Pauline was the most blissful of her sex as she drove out to St. Cloud." But at St. Cloud also, things had been taken seriously. Josephine had heard of the green velvet; she had had her drawing-room re-decorated entirely in blue, "so as to kill the effect." She had heard of the diamonds too: she wore not a morsel of jewellery herself. To our imagination it is Josephine, and not the little *parvenue* in green velvet, who makes the picture. She was a most attractive woman, with a beautiful figure, simple and stately manners, an exceedingly lovely voice—and she wore that day a dress of Indian muslin, with a broad hem of gold tissue, very expensive in its consummate simplicity. The corsage was draped on the shoulders with two lions' heads in gold enamelled with black, and for belt she wore a flat stiff circlet of gold, fastened by a similar lion's head.

* The wedding was celebrated without any pomp at Joseph's country-house, in the absence of Napoleon.

Her lovely arms were bare. . . . Exquisite. And, by contrast, with what a blaring vulgarity do the six horses, the torch-bearers, of the ridiculous Pauline blaze into the court-yard, do the diamonds blaze, shortly afterwards, into the room! "She looked radiant"—but it was a radiancy of opera-bouffe; all the honours belong to the softly-gowned, silver-voiced lady of the house, who, further to underline her moral victory, "spoke of the diamonds." The visit passed off quite agreeably: they kissed on parting. . . . Well, well!

After this, Pauline went with her husband to Rome. There they inhabited the Palazzo Borghese, called the Piano Borghese, because in shape it resembled a piano. Did the Queen of Gewgaws appreciate the incomparable treasures which surrounded her there?—all in later years, acquired by Napoleon in a "forced sale," perhaps the most signal instance of his wholesale plundering on record!

Dermide Leclerc died in this year (1806). There is a legend that Pauline insisted on burying him with her own hands, but Masson discredits it. The child died at Frascati, while his mother was at some distant bathing-place, and she never knew of his illness until he was dead. The Leclerc family accused her of having been the cause of his death, for she had been urgently counselled not to take him to Italy. He was only six years old, "so she did not wear black for him."

In 1804, Napoleon declared himself Emperor of the French. The family assembled at Paris for this apotheosis, with the exceptions of Madame Mère and Lucien, with whom Napoleon had quarrelled on account of his marriage.*

It was at this time that Pauline and her husband ceased to live together. She had never been really well since her marriage. For a while she lived at Petit Trianon, and spent her day in grumbling about everything, and worrying her servants to death; yet all her efforts, it would seem, had not availed to get her house

* Although his mother was not present, Napoleon ordered David to include her in his great Coronation-picture, thus falsifying history at his pleasure.

in order, for Napoleon one day paid a surprise-visit, and found an oil-bottle where no oil-bottle should have been. "*Point d'ordre ici: l'argenterie traîne!*" he thundered forth, and the much-nagged servants found themselves in disgrace again.

Pauline was Princess of Guastalla now. Napoleon had bought the title for her, and at first she was delighted. But too soon the truth came out: Guastalla was a wretched village, with an insignificant population. Its Princess wept bitterly. "Princess, indeed! Ruling over a dirty village, and the pigs that run about it!" . . . Nothing pleased her just then: she was so prodigiously bored by Borghese! What could Napoleon do about *that* for her? He did something practical: he gave Borghese an important military appointment which took him right away. Instantly, Petit Trianon became the most adorable place on earth. She stayed there the whole summer, going then to her palace in the Faubourg St. Honoré at Paris, where she entertained sumptuously. Life was all smiling and gay, when suddenly that husband of hers had the impertinence to come so near as Lunéville. Intolerable—would he expect to come to her parties? He did, and he came. From that hour, boredom descended upon his Princess again. Everything he did got on her nerves. "Paulette," indeed! She would not be called Paulette any longer. Pauline was her name: the Princess *Pauline*—not Borghese. It was from her own Principality that she derived her title. . . . At last Borghese went back to Rome. She breathed again. "He began to lead a bachelor's life." . . . All was well, so long as he would keep out of her sight!

Who were the lovers at this time? There had been a brief interlude with one Blangini, a fashionable song-writer and singer. She took a fancy to him, and made him Director of her Music. Josephine instantly appointed him her Chamber-Composer. He was commanded by Pauline to choose between them. He chose her; a smile was his reward. "Later on, he was to have others."

A far more serious business was her intrigue with Louis-Philippe-Auguste de Forbin, very good-looking, and an amateur painter of talent, actually a pupil of David. He was really brilliant, audacious, "interesting"—a halo of misfortunes

and of debts around him; a halo of love-affairs too, but they all faded before the glory of this one, and Pauline cared more for him than she ever cared for any other man. Châteaubriand met him just then at Geneva, in a state of beatitude. "Forbin walks on air! He's a good fellow, but so disgustingly happy!" . . . She was quite mellowed by her love; dress lost a little of its importance; she was very well and very happy, although before Forbin appeared, she had been much preoccupied with her health. Milk-baths had threatened to become her mania. She had begun with two a week—each took ten pints of milk, and cost six francs—but the habit encroached, till she could not do with less than one a day, especially when travelling. On one of her journeys, she found herself at Bar, where her brother-in-law, M. Leclerc, was Governor. He was warned that milk-baths would be required. They were difficult to arrange for in a small place: all the soldiers of the Departmental Guard were sent to neighbouring villages, and each came back, triumphant, with his pot of milk. It was just being warmed when she arrived.

"How about my bath?"

"It is ready," replied Leclerc proudly.

"And the douche?"

"That is more difficult. We have no appliances."

"Oh, have a hole made in the ceiling just above the bath. Forgive my troubling you, dear brother, but it is necessary for my health."

It was done; "and for long afterwards, the room smelt like a badly-kept dairy."

Forbin's arrival nipped this mania in the bud. When she went to Paris afterwards, she appointed him her Chamberlain. Everything went through his hands, "and everything stayed there." That is the last we hear of him.

The dress question assumed, in 1807, when the Court was at Fontainebleau, a fresh importance. There was a great deal of hunting; Napoleon desired that the ladies should have a special costume for this, and one was accordingly designed by the sublime Leroy. It consisted of a long velvet coat, and a dress of embroidered white satin. There were velvet boots to match the coat, cap also to match, and a white scarf. Josephine's set wore

amaranth with gold embroidery; Hortense, Queen of Holland's, blue and silver; the Grand-Duchess of Berg and Cleves', rose-colour and silver; Pauline's, mauve and silver. The cortége may, to the profane, suggest a circus-procession, but it glittered and glimmered effectively enough, no doubt, amid the glades of Fontainebleau.

Thence she went to Nice. Every day she was there, boxes of dresses, hats, chiffons of all kinds arrived from Paris.* She had a lovely villa; etiquette was laid aside—she told piquante stories, sang Blangini's songs, fell into his arms after singing them, and took him definitely for her lover. But Napoleon was watching. It was in this year (1808) that he appointed Borghese Governor-General of the Departments beyond the Alps, and ordered him to take his wife with him to Turin. They set out. Seven carriages were loaded with boxes; Pauline herself had a superb equipage, and she insisted upon a carrying-chair as well. "They could take her up and down the hills in it." The feat was loyally attempted, but she pronounced the sensation unbearable. She would walk. She walked. "Oh, it's killing me!" Groaning deeply, she got back into the carriage, where poor worried Borghese was snatching a moment of tranquillity. He was obliged to get out: she could not endure to be crushed. . . . Borghese walked most of the way.

When they reached the first village of his new territory, a fresh complication arose. It was a question of precedence; Pauline had been thinking, and now she announced the result. "As the sister of the French Emperor, she was superior in rank to her husband, who owed his post as Governor-General to Napoleon." If any addresses were presented, it would be for her to make reply. Borghese refused to give way. When the Mayor arrived with the address, he attempted to speak—she interrupted him. The Mayor waited, while the Prince and Princess squabbled. "Finally, their Royal Highnesses drove off without making any reply at all."

* Napoleon said at St. Helena that if he had known of her boundless extravagance at this time, he would have put an end to it. "Spoken for posterity," comments the sardonic Turquan. "He must have known, for he had a spy at Nice, expressly to watch Pauline."

The Turin experiment was short-lived. She had a brilliant Court; she was the loveliest woman there; her husband left her in peace; there were visits of monarchs, receptions, dinners; her cook had the pay of a General of Division; she had two enormous negroes, with ostrich feathers on their heads, to stand behind her chair—and yet she was not happy. The mere proximity of Borghese was fatal. She must leave Turin. Napoleon refused permission. She rolled on the carpet with rage, took every drug she could think of to make herself ill; finally achieved a grand night-alarm at the country seat, Stupinigi. Doctor Vastapani, from Turin, ordered an immediate change of air: Aix-en-Savoie, for choice. He was genuinely alarmed, but not another soul in the house believed in her illness.

She got to Aix-en-Savoie, and thence to Paris. Napoleon, always indulgent, merely demanded from her a promise to behave herself. She did promise, but she did not behave herself. She would receive men's visits in her bath—the mitigating circumstance being that the men were almost invariably her lovers! * She sat for Canova's famous nude statue. . . . "She had something to show, in short—and she showed it." Her love-affair at this time was a *réchauffé*. Jules de Canouville reappeared, and they fell in love again. It was a violent attachment—and a very open one. There were fresh stories every day. One about a dentist's visit had an immense success. He came one morning to attend Pauline, and found, lying on a sofa in her dressing-room, a young man who said, "Take great care, sir. I prize my Paulette's lovely teeth beyond anything."

"Do not be uneasy, *mon prince*," replied the dentist, touched by the marital solicitude. He was to be still further moved, for at the critical moment, the lady refused to undergo the ordeal. The young man encouraged her: it was nothing once you had made up your mind.

"Very well then. *You* have one out first."

"But I have nothing the matter with my teeth!"

"You must have one out, or I won't."

"Mon prince" consented. *Quel mari!* The dentist could

* Constant (Napoleon's valet) says in his *Memoirs* that he did not like even secretly to think of the things Pauline used to do.

not say enough about him. "One had heard there were troubles between the Prince and Princess—how people slandered the great!" No one undeceived him; but that evening Paris was dying of inextinguishable laughter.

It is almost a relief to turn from the Queen of Gew-gaws to tragedy; and tragedy was upon Josephine then. Napoleon, from the time he became Emperor in 1804, had had his heart set upon founding a dynasty. The first step was to divorce his childless wife. In her despair, Josephine committed the one truly infamous action of her erring life—she allowed to be spread abroad those terrible rumours with regard to her husband and his sister which must be touched upon, however reluctantly, in any narrative concerned with Pauline Borghese.

Thiers, Fouché, Madame de Rémusat, Louis Favre (in his curious book, *Les Confidences d'un vieux Palais : Le Luxembourg*) —all speak as if they believed these rumours, Fouché especially. But Fouché was Josephine's creature: * his testimony may be set aside. The Monnier MSS. speak of them as a matter of common knowledge. Arthur Lévy denies them utterly; Sir Walter Scott also repels them. . . . Pauline's love for her brother was the only feeling not entirely selfish that she ever knew; and he returned it—she was always his favourite sister. He delighted in her caprices, the little squabbles she was for ever bringing about —they quarrelled continually, but quickly made it up again; he gave her more beautiful presents than he ever gave to Eliza or Caroline . . . it was one of those relationships, rare in real life, which are the constant theme of romance; but when romance invades reality, it is usually but too plainly shown its place.

When in 1809, the Emperor decided to divorce Josephine, Pauline was overjoyed, and took no pains to conceal it. But she did not like Marie-Louise either. Not long after the marriage, Napoleon detected her "making one of those gestures which the people apply to credulous and deceived married folk." He rose

* She used to give him a thousand francs a day to spy upon her husband.

in anger, but the naughty Princess made off hastily. She never reappeared at Court after that day.

What remains to tell? The tale of her lovers—Montrond Brack, the austere General Drouot, Dachaud; of her chiffons—"a cap of Honiton lace with bows of rose-ribbon, in which she looked as pretty as an angel"; of her improprieties—the famous anecdote of her negro-servant, Paul, whose function it was to put her into her bath. Remonstrated with on this, she answered, with her infantile air, "*Est-ce que vous appelez cette chose-là, un homme?*" but, to ensure a perfect propriety, she arranged that he should marry her head-housemaid, continuing his duties to herself. . . .

In 1814, came the Fall of the Empire. She was at Luc when Napoleon abdicated, and knew nothing of it until, on April 26th, at two o'clock in the afternoon, a courier came to say that the Emperor was arriving at her house. Before he appeared, the Commissioners of the Allied Powers drove up, and told her the shattering news.

She cried, "He must be dead!"

"No, he is not dead."

"How could he live through this?" She fainted—and came back to consciousness to hear a raging mob shouting beneath her windows, "*À bas le tyran!*"

Just then he arrived. She tried to get up to receive him. She could not—she fell back fainting again. He entered. She saw that he wore the Austrian uniform! He had put it on to save himself from the mob—but to her the sight was beyond endurance. She refused to embrace him while he had it on. He went and changed it. . . .

He did not allow her to join him in Elba until August. She and Madame Mère were with him there, living the old frivolous life, until his escape on February 26th, 1815. She gave him all her diamonds in case of his need: he had them with him in his carriage at Waterloo.* She never failed him; the other sisters never stretched out a finger to help. Vanity may have had its part in her adoration, but vanity has its victories no less than virtue; in all her relations to Napoleon, let us rejoice to find no wavering nor shadow of turning.

* They fell into the hands of the English.

She was in Rome when he died—living with Madame Mère in the Falconieri Palace. She had been too ill to go to him at St. Helena, but she had tried to sell everything valuable that she possessed to help him. Doctor Antommarchi brought the detailed news. He had found Marie-Louise at the theatre; Louis, ex-King of Holland, had refused, on the ground of deep grief, to receive him; Pauline saw him without a moment's delay. "She wept bitterly on hearing all the particulars of that long agony." . . .

In 1823, her own end drew near. She was sent from Rome to her country-house near the Porta Pia; later, was taken to Florence. Before her death, on June 9th, 1825, at the age of forty-four, she was reconciled to Prince Borghese.

The closing scene?

She had a mirror brought to her when she was dying, and the Queen of Gew-gaws looked at herself for the last time.

"I am ready to die. I am still beautiful.". . . It was her religion. She held the mirror—symbol of her faith!—in her hand until the end.

LOUISE OF STOLBERG

COUNTESS OF ALBANY

1753–1824

CHARLES EDWARD STUART, dissolute and drunken British Pretender; Vittorio Alfieri, austere and brilliant Italian poet; François Xavier Fabre, cheerful and mediocre French painter—these are the men who each in turn possessed Louise of Stolberg's life. Did woman ever choose more oddly contrasted types? *Choose:* the word arrests us. When, in reality, did she choose at all? Very certainly not, when at twenty she was married—by France and her foolish, worthless mother—to the wreck of what once had been Bonnie Prince Charlie. And when Vittorio Alfieri stormed into her life? Scarcely, one divines; for he dominated her then as he dominated her to the end of his days. Again, when Fabre's hour arrived, one feels that nothing so definite as "choice" any longer remained as a possibility for her, so far as the feelings were concerned. Into the *liaison* with him she drifted aimlessly, possessed as she was by a sort of lazy dependence upon masculinity for the conduct of her affairs, and, for the rest, with but one motive really surviving in her at all—the desire to be the most distinguished salonist of her day, a vanity like another, wherein genuine culture and the instinct to arrange, to meddle, were oddly intertwined. Hers was the *beauté du diable* in a wider sense than the ordinary. Not only was her charm of appearance dependent on its freshness, but her charm of mind seems to have been so as well. Like the form, which grew heavy and dowdy—like the face, which lost expression and mobility—so the mind became ponderous, pedantic, obstinate; she tyrannised where formerly she had assimilated,

" she would lose friends sooner than concede a point." . . . But let us introduce her in all the grace, vivacity, and flexibility of her youth, which nevertheless, from twenty onwards, was the saddest period of her life.

After France's insult to Charles Edward in 1748—when he had been arrested, bound hand and foot, and flung into prison, to be liberated only through the force of popular indignation—France had utterly ignored him, though Louis XV., indeed, continued to pay him his pension, which he, while professing loud hostility to the King and the country, eagerly accepted. But suddenly towards 1772, the French Ministry fell into one of its recurrent panics about the extinction of the House of Stuart. That fallen House could still be useful to France, for against England a Pretender was a priceless weapon. . . . The Stuarts must not be allowed to die out! But unless Charles Edward could be induced to marry, that infallibly would happen ; for had not his brother Henry become a priest of the Roman Church, while all that he himself had at present to offer was an illegitimate daughter! " Something must be done," fussed d'Aiguillon ; and so Cousin FitzJames (by the left hand) consented to take soundings. Would Cousin Charles marry ? A pension of forty-thousand crowns if he would! Hitherto he had always refused. This time—the pension helping him—he consented, hurried to Paris from Avignon (whither he had retired after the shame of '48), and eagerly agreed to every suggestion made by Versailles —that is to say, by crafty, scornful d'Aiguillon and arrogant Cousin FitzJames, as proud of the bar-sinister which made him a Stuart as any legitimate of his blameless shield. Cousin Fitz-James' eldest son had just married Princess Caroline of Stolberg-Gedern—and nothing could be more convenient than that Charles should marry her elder sister Louise, the nineteen-yeared Canoness of the Abbey of Sainte Wandru at Mons.

Her father had been Prince Gustavus-Adolphus of Stolberg-Gedern, Prince of the Empire, who had died in the Battle of Leuthen ; her mother was Elizabeth-Philippine, Countess of Horn. The Stolbergs were illustrious enough, but the Horns

were positively dazzling, allied with every glittering name that ever was: Gonzagas of Mantua, Colonnas, Orsinis, Medina-Cœlis, Lignes, Croys, Hohenzollerns, Bruces! . . . Nevertheless, after the Prince's death, poor Elizabeth-Philippine had to pull the devil very hard indeed by the tail. Maria-Theresa, Empress of Austria, that kindliest of meddlers, took pity on her, relieved her of some of the pulling by giving her a pension, and admitted two of her four girls to the rich and vastly exclusive Chapter of Sainte Wandru at Mons.

In an atmosphere of high graceful snobbery, then, had Louise of Stolberg grown up—an atmosphere "where the source of all dignity, jealousy, and triumph was greatness of birth and connection." A cultured creature she—in the amateurish fashion which mostly marks illustrious birth in its dealings with art; but accomplished, intelligent, charming, and very pretty, with dark hazel eyes and golden hair, a wild-rose skin, tip-tilted nose, vivacious and sympathetic expression. Romantic, too, we may guess; filled with enthusiasm for noble deeds, with sympathy for misfortune (and oh, how especially for Royal misfortune!)—ripe, in fact, for just such a marriage as was now arranged for her with no consultation of herself, and acquiescent quite in such arrangement, for along the road which leads to wedlock Romance had never dared to stray. A husband was an institution—and over an institution even schoolgirls can hardly wax sentimental. But, indeed, if Sentiment and Romance *had* been germane at all to the matter, she might well have fancied that in this betrothal they were exquisitely present.

Charles Edward Stuart: The Young Pretender: Bonnie Prince Charlie: those names spell magic still, although Louise of Stolberg's story should cure us of illusion—does cure us, while we read. But the illusion is too deeply interwoven with many things—with truth, for one thing! "All we believed *was* true." . . . And so (the book with the story of Louise of Stolberg in it laid down) forgetfulness and remembrance come again, and a Jacobite song can once more turn us hot and cold by turns, a picture or a miniature bring the pleasant sentimental sigh, a brooch, a pair of paste shoe-buckles in an Edinburgh dealer's window, lure us in to touch and dream—oblivious, in our reverie,

THE DUCHESS OF ALBANY

From an Old Print

of the bestial creature whom in reality (if they belonged to Charles Edward's later years) they decorated, a creature so remote from the Prince Charlie of our fond fingering that even a dealer in antiques could invent no more grotesque deception!

He was fifty-two, and she between nineteen and twenty when on Good Friday, April 17, 1772, they were married at Macerata, one of the larger towns of the March of Ancona: the golden-haired, wild-rose maiden and the gaunt elderly man with red, bloated face, made redder by the contrast of a white wig, and the reflection from a crimson silk suit, crossed with the Ribbon of the Garter. "Dull, thick, silent-looking lips, of purplish red scarce redder than the skin; pale-blue eyes tending to a watery greyness, leaden, vague, sad, but with angry streakings of red; something inexpressibly sad, gloomy, helpless, vacant and debased in the whole face:" so Vernon Lee describes him for us from a crayon portrait taken at the time—and it needs but little knowledge of human nature to ask ourselves the instant question: *Who will be Louise of Albany's lover?*

The omen of the wedding-day was loud enough, if omens had been needed. She often spoke of it in later life: "the sort of marriage that might be looked for from the day of its celebration." But not days nor dates it was which could alter it, though they should have chosen the most propitious of them all. . . . And yet at the beginning things were not so very ill. Charmed into some shame, some decency—touched perhaps by the young innocence and grace—vain certainly of the little bright bride, Charles Edward made an effort. For the earliest few months, he kept away from "the nasty bottle" (so Brother Henry, in a characteristic, helpless sort of phrase, summed up his drunken habits); he made himself as acceptable as he now could be to a woman; and she, innocent, romantic, yet as regarded marriage endowed with all the common-sense of the period—she probably endured all disagreeables with the sage reflection that *le mariage était comme ça.* Disagreeable enough in truth it must all have been—prosaic enough, dreary enough. That Court-life which even at its best is penitential, Louise of Albany had to endure at its worst. For theirs was but the simulacrum of a Court—a lie, a badly-told tale in which only the dull parts seemed true. They

were King and Queen—but they had no Kingdom. They had a Court—but there were no courtiers in it. They had jewels—but no crown; etiquette—but no ceremonial; isolation—but no power. The Pope, the King of France, the Grand-Duke of Tuscany—all refused to recognise the Count of Albany as King of England, and *he* refused to be recognised as anything else. Prince of Wales—yes! they would give him that, if he would be satisfied with that? He would not—and from place to place he wandered, sulking. First, after their marriage, it was Rome, in the Palace which closes the narrow end of the Square Dei Santissimi Apostoli. And so the little bride—since she must be called Queen of Something!—came to be called Queen of the Apostles. She found Roman society very dull, as she was bound to find any society. Those brilliant balls, those blithe intimate evenings, which all other great ladies enjoyed, Louise must abjure; only to theatres, to public balls, might she betake herself—always haunted by the husband, always watched and checked, for Charles Edward was already showing that insensate jealousy which, later, led him to shadow her morning, noon, and night, in an obsession of companionship which, even to an adoring wife from the most desirable of husbands, must have proved fatiguing, enervating, maddening.

But she was abnormally sweet-tempered; she bore it all with patience. Her room could be entered only through his room, for "I am resolved that the succession shall not be dubious," he would chivalrously say; she might not stir out-of-doors without him, and he never left her behind when *he* drove out, or, if he did, she was locked into her room . . . yet harmoniously, almost gaily, for a while the desperate thing went on! Karl Victor Bonstetten, a delightful irresponsible young German, went to pay his respects to the Queen of the Apostles, and found a Queen of Hearts instead: a little blooming, captivating Queen, who still could laugh at her husband's famous tale of the '45, when he had been disguised as a woman. How many times had she heard it already, young Bonstetten wondered, listening to the trill of pretty mirth. . . . "She was enough to turn all heads," he wrote in his Memoirs. She turned his permanently. Forty-four years later (when he was seventy), he wrote to her from

Rome: "I never pass through the Apostles' Square without looking up at that balcony, at that house, where I saw you for the first time."

Thus the initiatory year went by—not too unendurably. For all the difficulties, she did succeed in drawing interesting men and women to her salon. Mengs, the Bohemian painter, called the Raphael of Germany, Angelica Kauffmann, Ippolito Pindemonte, an Italian poet—such folk brightened her days and nights, giving her an interest in life which other women might have found unsatisfying, but which to her represented real excitement. She was the salonist born. Creative power she did not at all possess; assimilative power was hers in an extraordinary degree. She devoured culture, so to speak; she read enormously, and with a "deep seriousness" which might easily (and did in later life) incur the reproach of pedantry. For she took endless notes; she compared, connoted, "conferred"; she epitomised, analysed, synthesised, in a methodical diligence which never quite caught the spark from heaven, and which, as she grew older, fell into something that we can only think of as an utter apathy with all the externals of enthusiasm—a state of mind akin to that state of body in which drug-taking has become habitual.

In the earlier days, however, she had the grace of her charming youth wherewith to perfume the pedantry. She was witty, high-spirited, sweet; the tinkling laugh trilled for many other things besides Charles Edward's stories. "Little malicious touches" she had, when the pretty impertinent nose was tilted and the fair head tossed; mischief lurked in the dark eyes, dimples round the fresh lips; "a childish woman of the world, a bright light handful of thistle-bloom." . . . That was the external aspect. And within? The bride of Charles Edward—Charles Edward bloated, drunken, brutal, for his best behaviour did not last long. . . . what was Louise of Albany's inward life? Had it been very terrible, the awakening—the earlier repulsion, born of ignorance? the later, born of knowledge? The first time she had found him, drunk, beside her—what had that meant to the little Queen of Hearts? Whatever it had meant, she hid it bravely. That she could be happy no one was wild enough to dream, or (in those franker days) hypocritical

enough to say. But to what degree was she *un*happy? That was what the worlds of Rome and Florence were not allowed to divine. Absolutely decorous, absolutely irreproachable was she. In that age, when the *cicisbeo* was a recognised institution of Italian society—so recognised, so accepted, that there was a set code of rules and regulations for him!—Louise of Albany had no *cicisbeo*. True, it would have been difficult, with such a husband, to set him up; but the extraordinary thing was that she did not seem even faintly to desire to do so. "She is satisfied with her books!" So the Roman and Florentine ladies whispered, tittering; and what sort of a woman might she be, whom books could satisfy? Well, the question has not to this day been answered—"the sort of woman whom books can satisfy" having, we may safely hazard, not as yet emerged. But the sort of woman whom books, in the desert of an uncongenial childless marriage, can solace, is a perennial type. Which of us does not know her—the dreamer, solitary and intense, strenuous yet not eager, avid yet not hungry, drinking deep draughts from the Pierian stream, yet never really thirsty? Her study is a refuge, not a Paradise; her books are anodynes, not wine of the spirit. Louise of Albany was not precisely like that, because (as we think) her nature was only passively sensible to joy—and therefore only passively sensible to sorrow. Yet somehow culture, though her whole life was given up to it, seems never to have "rung the bell." . . . The bell, in fact, we vaguely feel, was never rung. First, the wild-rose child was disappointed; then the saddened, disillusioned, but still romantic, woman; finally, everything was disappointment for everybody, and she herself the greatest disappointment of all.

They left Rome for Florence in 1774, once more in search of recognition, which once more they did not find. The Grand-Duke of Tuscany ignored them. The nobles would have received them, but "received" Charles Edward would not be; and so the old miserable haunted isolation was the lot again of our Queen of Hearts—an isolation, now, with grievously

aggravated terrors. For her husband was back at the nasty bottle. Those nights at the theatre and the opera which were almost her only outside distraction, were now made unendurable by the presence—incessant as ever—of a drunkard who brought his flask of Cyprus or his brandy-bottle to the very box itself that he might swill uninterruptedly; who, later, ordered to be installed there a sofa upon which to "sleep it off" . . . and fortunate was the Countess of Albany when that was all of degradation which the evening held for her. For there were nights when his lackeys had to carry the "King of England" to his carriage; other nights when, in the public corridors, they had to attend him solemnly through the most disgusting of the disgusts of drunkenness. . . . And soon, it was not only drunkenness; soon foul oaths would scream at her, foul acts, unknown and hideous words, assail her—as hard to bear, perhaps, as the blows that rained upon her later still.

Horror had come full tide, as it was bound to come; and not long, in such a case, does Destiny delay. Inevitably, with the hour came the man.

In the autumn of 1777, somebody brought to the Palazzo Guadagni a tall pale handsome young officer, with brilliant blue eyes and masses of curling red hair—a fashionable young officer with a reputation for gallantry and wonderful horses, for a disdainful and sardonic tongue, an utterly tameless spirit, a mad love of "Liberty," a marvellous violence and a marvellous self-control. . . . Vittorio Alfieri, in short, Sardinian officer, would-be dramatist, horse-tamer, libertine, aristocrat, man-of-fashion, revolutionary—*toute la lyre!* He was barely twenty-eight, yet he had travelled enormously, loved enormously, hated enormously—and been utterly unhappy throughout it all. As a child, he had been morbid and unbalanced; as a young man, fiery and excitable and avid of pleasures, "which he ate up so fast that he soon became thirsty for more"—and yet more and more, until the world could not hold the vastness of his desire. "I felt as if my head would burst with the excitement every moment—everything was so new and beautiful." "It was a glorious day . . . I went almost crazy with excitement." So

he would write in his Autobiography, and so it was with him all his life through. Alfieri's head was always ready to burst; he was always crazy with excitement. Scarcely capable of happiness was he, but into his misery, his dissatisfaction with life, he struck such fire that they became emotions—burning, blazing, with all the unreason of emotions, with all their force, their throb and thrill, their mobility, instability. . . . His youth had been wasted, yet nothing in the world had been denied him. His parents were rich, noble, indulgent; his relatives encouraging (rarest surely of all Fortune's gifts!); his teachers not more apathetic than the general in those days. Money had never been wanting: to his wildest extravagances there was no one to demur. Horses and clothes had been his foibles —horses especially. They were the only creatures that had stirred his heart at all, though his love-affairs had been incessant. But these had been unbeautified by any romance, or even any poor illusion of romance: Alfieri had actually hated the women who enslaved him, and they had been evil without exception. "I felt a deep and malignant melancholy": that was his conception, until 1777, of the experience called "being in love"! He had known most things, in short, before he met Louise of Albany, except the thing which she of all women could best teach him: the enjoyment of a state of lucid tranquillity, and at the same time energy, of mind and body. "I found that I had at last met the woman for whom I had been searching, who instead of being, like all the others I had known, an obstacle to literary fame, an impediment to useful occupations, and a detriment to all elevated thoughts, was an incentive and a noble example to every great work; and I, recognising and appreciating such a rare treasure, gave myself up entirely to her."

That is his version of their long love-affair, and it is as true as he was capable of making it. All that Alfieri had to give, he gave. And she? She was the "anchor of my life," *la dolce metà di me stesso*—and, as well, his *souffre-douleur*, his nurse, his housekeeper, trumpeter, advertising-agent. . . . Perseus never spared his Andromeda; if she had been delivered from the dragon, she was nevertheless still chained to the rock—the rock of Alfieri's unconscious and incomparable selfishness.

It was three years after their meeting that the actual crisis came. Till then, their relations had been purely intellectual. It would have been difficult, indeed, to achieve any closer friendship, for Charles Edward haunted her as ever. "He was never further off than the next room." But one feels that even without the safeguard of his jealousy, the strange lovers might very probably have done no otherwise than as they did. For to neither had passion shown anything of its glamour. To her, it had been merely loathsome; to him, merely degrading. And he—for ever posing to himself, though all unconsciously—hugged the thought that here was the new Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura . . . a Beatrice, a Laura, not indeed "enskied and sainted," but martyrised, insulted, terrified, with every day that dawned and night that fell. And nothing could be done; they could not run away together—that would mean instant separation. The Catholic Church could grant no divorce—the husband would certainly make no arrangement . . . and so they acquiesced; they took from life what life could give them—until the St. Andrew's Day of 1780.

On that day, after a drunken orgy, the Pretender "roused his wife in the middle of the night with a torrent of insulting language which provoked her to vehement recrimination; he beat her, committed foul acts on her, and finished by attempting to strangle her in her bed." The servants heard her screams, came hurrying, dragged him away—otherwise St. Andrew's night would have been Louise of Albany's last night on earth. . . . Now there was no choice. She must leave her husband.

"Had she made any effort to redeem him? We do not know," remarks Taillandier. We do not know, but we can guess. Did she ever make an effort of any kind? Never. Passivity, hidden beneath the superficial social vivacity of her *allure*, was the essential thing in her character. . . She escaped now, but the escape was engineered for her by others—by Alfieri and a woman-friend and that woman-friend's *cavaliere servente*. Madame Orlandini drove her to a convent "to see some needlework," Charles Edward of course in attendance. At the convent gates, a Mr. Geoghegan was waiting. He helped out the ladies, who ran quickly up the steps, while Geoghegan offered his arm

to the Pretender. He, disabled by dropsy, followed much more slowly. The ladies were safely in . . . and just as the two men reached the heavy portal, it was flung to in their faces. "A mistake," explained Geoghegan. "They will soon find that it is; they will have to open!" shouted Charles Edward, battering on the door. But the door remained as it was for several minutes; then it slowly opened, and the Lady Abbess herself appeared behind a grating. The Count of Albany could not enter, she announced; his wife had sought an asylum in the Abbey, under the protection of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany. . . . The days and nights of terror were done with, for ever. "Enough," wrote Alfieri, "for me to say that I saved the Countess from the tyranny of a brutal and drunken master, without sullying her honour—dying as she was, inch by inch."

Such was the upshot of d'Aiguillon's grand scheme for the perpetuation of the House of Stuart!

So it began—the long love-affair which never ended in marriage. Rome first, in the Cardinal York's—Brother Henry's—Palace of the Cancelleria. But in 1783, Alfieri was banished by the Pope—or rather, anticipating banishment, haughtily left of his own accord. Then came a meeting at Colmar in 1784, and for the first time in their "long Platonic passion," Louise and her poet under the same roof—for Charles Edward, pressed by Gustavus III. of Sweden, had at last consented to a separation . . . In 1783, Louise had written to Francesco Gori, Alfieri's bosom-friend: "What a cruel thing to expect one's happiness from the death of another. O God! how it sullies the soul. Yet I cannot refrain from wishing it." The news of that other's death reached her in Paris in 1788. She received it with genuine emotion; "she was not a little touched," wrote Alfieri in his Autobiography. Well! human nature—especially feminine human nature—has these perennial surprises for itself. Saint-René Taillandier hints at remorse. Remorse—because she had not let herself be strangled in her bed by a drunken beast! Let us leave remorse out of the picture. But with what emotion, indeed, can we compose it? Charles Edward's natural daughter, Charlotte

Walkinshaw (by him created Duchess of Albany), had tended the last few years, and once again, he had known decency and sanity for a period—had even died with some degree of dignity and pathos. . . . It is this fact which Taillandier uses to justify his theory of remorse. But the difference between a daughter's position and a wife's with regard to such a man needs only to be pondered on for a moment—and there is an end once more. Again, Charlotte Walkinshaw, solitary, poor, and illegitimate, had everything to gain by such devotion; Louise of Stolberg had not only nothing to gain, but most things which humanity holds dear to lose. . . . Her tears, then, we may safely assign to the nerves, to a state of sudden emotional perplexity. She did not know how she felt—and so, like many another woman, she began to cry!

Well, now she is free, now she is all Alfieri's. What will she do? Some years earlier, writing to her poet's mother (who had no suspicion of their relation to one another), she had said, "I hope that if circumstances change, you will not see die out a family to which you are so attached, and that you will receive the greatest consolation from M. le Comte Alfieri." Plainly there, she hints at the secret—plainly too reveals her inmost hope. And yet—now . . . what does she do? "Nothing will be altered in our mode of life," wrote Alfieri to a friend at the time of the Pretender's death, and added "for the present." . . . Neither in the present nor in the future was anything altered. They never got married. The truth was that neither of them desired to get married. Whatever Louise of Albany may have dreamed in the earlier days of their love, she now dreamed no longer. . . . Or may it be, indeed, that she was dreaming still—and more romantically? Hardly, as we think, though that might well have been the explanation. Much that happened later shows too plainly that romance was neutral here. Her chief reason we take to have been an echo of the high graceful snobbery of her youth. She had never—even though Charles Edward at the time of the separation had expressly stipulated it—abandoned her title of Countess of Albany; and she kept it to the end. "Madame la Comtesse Alfieri": *that* did not carry with it the blazon: *Queen of England!* Her plate was engraved with the Royal Arms of England; a Royal Throne stood in her ante-room;

her servants addressed her by the title of a Queen; her flattering friends knew that *ma chère souveraine* was a favourite flattery. . . . Yet this was the woman who in 1791 was presented at the English Court, who sat in the King's box at the Opera, who accepted a seat at the foot of the throne in the House of Lords, on the Tenth of June—Prince Charlie's birthday! Puzzling enough, is it not? all of it—and puzzling it must remain. Disappointing enough, too, if we have not yet realised the essential of her character. Passivity: that is it. She was of the lymphatic ones. It is of no avail to champion her, to say that marriage, goodness knows! had shown little of its sanctity to the drunken Pretender's wife. That might well have been the reason, but that was not the reason. *She did not care*—she had settled down into a groove; it was a great deal of trouble, and it was not quite worth while, to get out of it. Nor was Alfieri eager either—he preferred the Petrarch and Laura legend to the commonplace of "Monsieur et Madame la Comtesse." If he had been eager, she would have acquiesced, they would have been married. Always she acquiesced—always. From the first to the last, the key-note is passivity.

"Alfieri was born to *do*, and he could only *write*."—Such was the judgment of Mme. de Staël. "Nothing", she pursued, "so deforms a work of imagination as to have a purpose in writing it. . . . Alfieri wants to march through literature to a political goal." That sums him up, incomparably—so far as his work is concerned. And as a human being, too, it by implication sums him up. He could never let the wind blow through his life. Always he had some violent pose or some violent unreasoned purpose—never for a moment could he give himself up to the joy of existence. Some fatal drop there was which poisoned all the fineness of the man. "There is declamation in the impulse of his heart," says Taillandier; "his love was all effort—not pretence, but a continual effort to deceive himself." . . . At Pisa, Siena, Florence, *la donna adorata* had many an ignoble rival. She knew it—what did she do? She acquiesced.

And when Alfieri died in 1803, once again the tears, the

emotion, were ready. They had been lovers for twenty-six years. "Happiness has disappeared out of the world for me," she wrote. . . . Yet already Fabre was her confessed admirer—some say, lover. That we do not think. She was fifty-one when Alfieri died; the heyday in the blood was tame. But very soon. Fabre *was* all to her that Alfieri had been—and more, for her salon, the real passion of her life (if her life had any passion), was pleasanter to her now. "Alfieri, far more agreeably than when alive—reigned over the Countess of Albany's salon!" says Taillandier, gaily. It became the gathering-place of Europe, "*La grande lanterne-magique passe tout par votre salon*," wrote Sismondi—Sismondi with whom she quarrelled in the end, as she quarrelled with Foscolo, because their politics differed actively from her own. . . . And so we see her, as at first was hinted, a stubborn, reactionary Tyrant of the Drawing-room—she who had been the yielding Egeria of Vittorio Alfieri! Passive no longer? Yes—as passive; for it was the enthusiasm, the ardour, which she could not feel that angered her with Foscolo and with Sismondi. She liked to take her notes, write her gossipy, cynical letters, receive her guests under the ægis of Alfieri's fame—although her gatherings were so different from what he had made them. "Her conversation was exquisite." . . . And so, an agreeable, stout, dowdy old lady we leave her: "Like a Rubens woman grown old," said Châteaubriand, though Lamartine, that exquisite sentimentalist, could still retrieve the light in the eyes, the radiance in the face. . . . "She is like a cook with pretty hands," wrote Stendhal of the Fabre portrait in the Uffizzi. . . . There is no need to sigh. For the wild-rose girl a tear may edge its way to our eyelids, but other wild-rose girls can bring the tears farther, can set up a real ache in the heart. . . . This one somehow leaves the heart less tender than she found it: one knows not too well why. To be passive is to escape too easily—that is why, perhaps. And moreover—the bell must ring, before pity and sympathy come rushing!

She died in 1824. To Fabre she left all that was left of Alfieri—works, books, letters, relics; and Fabre enriched his

native town of Montpellier with these—and with all that she had of Stuart relics besides. In the Musée Fabre the traveller may there inspect them. That monument strikes a truer note than the tomb in Santa Croce—the tomb for which Alfieri had written an epitaph: "To Vittorio Alfieri she was beyond all things beloved." Fabre did not use that epitaph; there is no word from Alfieri on her separate tomb in Santa Croce. Fabre built his Museum at Montpellier instead—serious intelligent Fabre, connoisseur of the first order in art; Fabre, in later life, cold, discreet, very respectful towards her memory, but never willing to speak of her; Fabre, who wrote in his copy of the *Biographie Universelle* (published in 1834) the following note against a statement of their secret marriage: "*C'est faux*"! It too may be inspected at Montpellier. . . . Was Fabre then, like so many another master of supreme good-taste, a master of supreme irony as well?

THE STAR

ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR

1692–1730

"SENSIBILITY": the word is obsolete, but it lives and sighs again as we read her story. The things we should like posterity to say of us—what a revealing admission that would be! Thinking of Adrienne Lecouvreur, we feel that we know what she would have liked. *Une destinée d'émotion*, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase. "She suffered much—she remembered long." . . . "It was her destiny to suffer through all that she loved" . . . that kind of thing! To suffer was the essential part of sensibility, to find a certain gentle joy in suffering was an extra grace—the virtuosity, as it were, of the art. "All day I have been plunged in a melancholy kind of languor, which yet was not insupportable. You don't understand that, because you're not weak nor a woman nor melancholy by nature." That passage strikes almost every note in the gamut of sensibility. . . . Adrienne Lecouvreur was the greatest tragic actress of her time, and among the greatest of any time—yet so far we have spoken only of the resigned, unhappy woman! There, again, is the kind of thing she would have liked. A supreme and impassioned artist, she would have chosen to be embalmed for her sorrows rather than for her fame.

Such a temperament, on the stage, is never acting. Immutably, it represents itself. Certain emotions stir it, certain passions inflame it—those alone it can render; but render those it must. Very literally, these natures need continually to "show off"—in the most delicate and sensitive way, sincere absolutely, yet watching themselves, as it were, on the stage of human life, and glad to afford to others, from behind the footlights, the same exquisite opportunity.

Thus we find Adrienne, born in 1692, reciting poetry with wonderful feeling before she was ten. People used to ask her into their houses to hear her: the little voice would sob and swell and die away divinely. She learned the verses—impassioned small laundress that she was!—between the wash-tub and the ironing-board. Her father was a poor journeyman-hatter of Daméry; soon after her birth, he went to live at Fîsmes, between Reims and Soissons—it was probably at Fîsmes that the poetry was learned and spoken. Well that she had such solace, for her childhood was poignantly unhappy. "A furious and jealous goddess" (so she wrote in later years) "seated herself beside my cradle, and regulated my destiny with a ruthless violence of persecution"—and indeed her father, a man of ungovernable temper, died raving mad. Of her mother we hear nothing. Destiny, not so utterly ruthless as the description would indicate, was at least interested, for she brought Couvreur * to Paris, and dropped him down close to the Comédie-Française, just newly installed at Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Près. Then Destiny abstracted her attention for a moment—and Couvreur moved to the Temple Quarter. But it made no difference. The move took place in 1705. "In that year, a lot of young people met at a grocer's in the Rue Férou, some steps from Adrienne's school, to act a play and an after-piece." The play was Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte*; the after-piece was *Le Deuil*, by Hauteroche and Thomas Corneille. Adrienne played Pauline in the tragedy. She was just thirteen! No one had trained her, she had no theatre-blood in her veins: she must have been, to quote the Abbé d'Allainval, "one of those extraordinary persons who create themselves"—for she recited Corneille's tirades "in a way that would have made Mlle. Du Clos turn pale with envy."

The performances were successful, they even had a little run; a benevolent rich lady, Madame Du Gué, who lived at Number Eight, Rue Garancière, heard of them and offered the young actors the big courtyard of her house to perform in. People went in crowds. "*La Cour, la Ville, la Comédie étaient là*"; Adrienne wore the wrong sort of dress—it was far from classical, having been borrowed from Madame Du Gué's maid; but again it made

* Adrienne added the "Le" to make a better stage-name.

no difference. "Everyone said she had only one step to take before becoming the greatest actress who had ever been with the Comédie-Française." Nor was she too dazzlingly the star: there was a boy called Minou, who played the part of Severus with fire, pathos, and intelligence. Indeed, so impassioned was Minou that when he had to say " . . . *Soutiens-moi : ce coup de foudre est grand*,"—he actually did fall down in a faint and had to be bled! "These risks are no longer run on the stage of the Théâtre-Français," remarks d'Allainval; but Minou recovered and finished his part. There indeed was the "glory and the dream"—that divine young enthusiasm; and there, too, in an ironic image of life, was Officialdom knocking at the door! The actors of the Théâtre-Français had sent the Police.

These actors were very jealous of their rights; they fought hard against all the illicit theatres of Paris—even our little people were not too insignificant to be crushed. There was actually some talk of imprisoning them. But Madame du Gué "stopped this"—by appealing, one trusts, to the Law's sense of humour! Nevertheless it was demanded that the performance should cease, so *Le Deuil* was never played. Perhaps it was a good omen—though Adrienne would never have admitted that. Sensibility saw only the bad omens. . . . The children took refuge in the Temple-Precincts, a sort of sanctuary where no one could be arrested for anything whatever without a *lettre-de-cachet* from the King. This lasted a while: two or three times they acted there—then, as life will have it, the little troop dispersed. But Adrienne's fate had been fixed by these theatricals. Her aunt the laundress had among her clients an actor called Legrand, belonging to the Official Theatre. "He desired to be Adrienne's second teacher, as Nature had been her first." But Legrand was an amiable procrastinator—of all things the most fatal to ambition. He put off the lessons so long and seemed so little in earnest that Adrienne, whom he had taken under his roof, left it, "and went off to play in the provinces." There for ten years—1706 to 1717—she led the life of a provincial actress. At Lunéville and Strasbourg, at Metz, Nancy, and Verdun she acted—she lived. By 1710, she was leading-lady at Lunéville; by 1711, "actress at the Court of Lorraine" and leading-lady at

Strasbourg, with a salary of 2000 *livres*—for that time, a remarkable one. It was her chosen life; away from the footlights she could not have existed; her success, so far, exceeded her dreams—yet "she never forgot the disgust it caused her." It is easy to understand that. She was fragile, exquisite, and impassioned, born for greatness unachieved as yet—and only to those who have achieved greatness, or who are made of coarser stuff than she, can the life of the travelling-actor smile. We hear of no jealousies, no unkindness, from her comrades. The atmosphere it was which disgusted her—the disorder, the slackness, the looseness every way of the living: "obligatory amusements, men's importunities, love-affairs." . . .

Love-affairs—the bane of her existence! Love—the profoundest instinct of her being! *Que faire au monde sans aimer?* she wrote to her life-long friend and would-be, but never-accepted, lover, d'Argental. "It might have been her motto," says Paléologue. Yet unlucky is a feeble term for what she was in love. Her lovers were all unworthy, except perhaps, as we illogically dream, the first, that Baron de D—— "of the Regiment of Picardy," who died so soon, who was mourned so beautifully—and replaced so quickly! D'Argental, the mere friend, the kindly, industrious, responsible, unrewarded, is the only fine-natured adorer she ever had. Her friends indeed were all that her lovers ought to have been. Once "that passion" came into the story, Adrienne seemed unerringly to call forth only the evil in her man. He would show himself false or cowardly or brutal or mercenary—manly in the true sense, if she loved him, he never proved.

During this Alsatian period, as we may call it, she had four love-affairs. First the Baron de D——; then Philippe Le Roy, *officier de Monseigneur le duc de Lorraine*, who was probably the father of her first child, though Des Boulmiers attributes it to D—— and others to Clavel, an actor to whom she was "sadly faithful" for two years. When the Baron de D—— died, Adrienne was in despair; but before long we find her discussing the question of marriage with Clavel, in a letter which has been much eulogised by her biographers. He had promised, or led her to think that he had promised, marriage, and she wrote:

"Think well; you still are master. Remember that I possess nothing and owe much, and that you can do better elsewhere. . . . Do not spare me. . . . Don't promise me anything that you don't mean to perform, even if you promise to hate me. I should prefer that to being deceived. . . . I care more for your interests than my own. I know you well enough to be aware that you enjoy being generous, and that you might even specially enjoy beating me at my own game—but, once more, do think it well over. . . . Follow your inclination without thinking too much of the consequences. I shall play my part, whatever it may be, as well as I possibly can, whether I keep you or lose you. . . . If I lose you, at least I shall hope that it may not be entirely, and that I may always possess a measure of your esteem. If you are happy, I shall have the joy of knowing it and of not having prevented it; and if you are not, at least it will not be I who have made you unhappy—and so I shall try, in one way or another, to console myself."

We confess that we do not admire this letter in the least. It is utterly lacking in charm; it is too-hideously reasonable—and worse, it strikes us, not precisely as insincere, but as studied, overcharged: an orgie of self-abjection, an offering to her own moral vanity, or a burnt-sacrifice to the Moloch of male selfishness, whichever one prefers. And Clavel, poor man! had his own vanity no doubt, his own sense of generosity, and very assuredly his own share of the secular selfishness. Clavel "refused the inestimable offer"—withdrawing both his virtues and his vices from the too-ardent victim. In short, if one was base, the other was abject. The combination is repellent—and the more so, because we very quickly find the lady occupied with a new lover. This was M. de Klinglin, Chief Magistrate of Strasbourg. He too made promises of marriage; but in 1716, though she had just presented him with a daughter, Klinglin too proved perfidious: "he yielded to the wishes of his family and made a more advantageous union."

Adrienne composed many a mournful aphorism in these early years. "I know too well by experience that one doesn't die of grief." "There are sweet errors which I dare not again commit: too-sad experiences have enlightened my reason." "I am

utterly weary of love, and prodigiously tempted to have done with it for the rest of my life; for, after all, I don't *want* either to die, or to go mad!" . . . *I know that one doesn't die of grief*; but the truth was that she could not have lived without it. Tears were her daily bread. One almost suspects that she would have found it difficult to accept nobility from a lover—and it was natural, perhaps, that a leading-lady should like to give herself the *beau rôle*!

Blameless be Clavel and Klinglin! It was Destiny, of course—Destiny who was resolved that Adrienne Lecouvreur should be the name of a great actress. Her grief and mortification at Klinglin's desertion impelled her to leave Strasbourg, and from Strasbourg, she went to Paris. There, on March 27, 1717, at the age of twenty-five, she made her *début* at the Comédie-Française, choosing her own piece. M. Georges Monval, the editor of her Collected Letters, and an authority on her history, says that she chose Crébillon's *Electra*; but the Biographical Dictionaries all agree in saying that her *début* in Paris was in the "part of *Monime*." Whatever it was in, her triumph was complete. It was said that she began where most great actresses ended. The special note of her art was subtlety—"those exquisite effects which come in a tender sigh, a speaking glance, a silence or a cry divinely imagined"; the special distinction of her method, her new way of reciting—a natural diction which had not hitherto been a grace of the French stage. "She almost invented the art of speaking directly to the heart"; but she did not overdo simplicity. Rant, exaggeration, bombast—with these she was unacquainted; nevertheless, a certain majesty of demeanour was inalienably hers. "She seemed a queen among the mimes"; there were even moments, in comedy, when she could not sufficiently put off these grand airs. In Marivaux' piece, *La Surprise de l'Amour*, she failed badly, and that was why she failed, for she acted *en reine* a quaint little modern, naughty Marquise, of the irresponsible order of beings. The only other misfit we hear of was recurrent: her failure ever to play Célimène in *Le Misanthrope*—Célimène, that "*pierre de touche des grandes coquettes*."

ADRIENNE LE COUVREUR

From an Old Print

But what were these among so many? For thirteen years she reigned supreme, the greatest tragic actress of her time, and never surpassed at any time in a certain type of part—that wherein sentiment prevails. "In such parts," writes an anonymous theatre-goer of 1723, "she is beyond anything I ever heard before. She fills the heart with sensibility, and one can see that she is filled with it herself." "I think our best actors," wrote Lady Montague, after seeing her in 1718, a year after her *débût*, "can only be said to speak, but these to feel." Adrienne's feeling was her great asset—and her great snare. She was so affected by her parts that it made her acting variable; "it was to be wished that she were less subject to her own caprice." Voltaire expressed in some stiffly graceful verses, this peculiarly personal effect:

> "'Moi' dit l' Amour, 'je ferai davantage,
> Je veux qu'elle aime.' À peine eût-il parlé
> Que dans l'instant vous devîntes parfaite—
> Des passions vous fûtes l'interprète."

"*La douleur fut la source et la rançon de sa gloire*," says another writer—and indeed such things were for ever being said to her, as they are now said of her. Diderot, with his theory that the actor should never feel the emotion he pourtrays, would have been a far more judicious critic for our sentimental genius!

She was a small and exquisite creature: "the best way I can describe her is to say she's like a miniature—she has all that sort of charm, subtlety, and delicacy." Nobly, on her slender little form, she carried her well-set head; graceful and gracious, sweet, appealing, wistful. . . . One imagines that people felt vaguely sympathetic, aimlessly protective, guessing her—the Star!—to be ill-starred. Her eyes spoke as eloquently as her lips; she was too thin, "but her cheeks were round enough." "Infinitely elegant and gracious," is Paléologue's phrase. In the much-vaunted Coypel portrait (which is lost, and survives only in Drevet's great engraving) she is represented as Cornelia, clasping a funeral-urn. It is pleasant to find Régnier and Monval on our side in deeply detesting this picture. Michelet, on the other hand, admires it intensely: *un rêve de douleur*, he murmurs, deeply moved—but Michelet was ever the prey of the sentimental. Monval prefers, and reproduces, Fontaine's picture

(dated after her death). To us neither is pleasing. Since she was "like a miniature," what a pity that the Abbé Bouret, instead of trying to poison her, did not in that form, of which he was a master, immortalise her *beauté mignonne*, her expressive and wistful grace!

There were troubles at the Comédie-Française. Professional and social jealousies, rivals, a *rivale-en-titre*, intrigues, affronts, disappointments. "She had come and broken *la quiétude hurlante* of her fellow-actors!" says a witty critic. She had introduced new ideas, in fact; and she was only twenty-five, while her rival Duclos was over fifty! Duclos was a plump little pink-and-white person, "and her diction was like her looks, affected and fluffy." She was frantically jealous. There was a whole hostile party, led by the Quinault set; and through all Adrienne's thirteen years at the Theatre, professional rancour endured, and showed itself perpetually. By the public, however, she was adored; by society, run after. It became the fashion to dine with her—greatly to her boredom at times. "I spend three-fourths of my time in doing things I dislike." . . . But Adrienne must always have her little moan. Whether bored or affected or neither or both, she did enormously improve the social position of actresses. When she came to Paris, they were in that respect non-existent. It was to Adrienne herself that Lord Peterborough (a reputed lover!) said on introduction: "Well, come! show me lots of wit and lots of love." We are not told how she answered him; but though he alone had the brutality to put his mental attitude into words, he did express a very general view of the actress's social function. Adrienne changed it all. She received everyone;* she was received everywhere. She cared deeply for her real friends; she cared most passionately for friendship. "We must just feel it, and believe in it; 'tis like a grace from Heaven." "*Allons rondement vers l'amitié!*" . . . These are wonderfully cheerful notes for her. Inevitably the little moan came in: for she was desperately exacting. "It is not worth while living unless one can see one's

* She lived in the Rue des Marais (now Rue de Visconti).

friends!" and even the most assiduous did not escape some complaining letters, in which the words "betrayal," "misery," "perfidious," chimed like little minute-bells. But they all forgave the complaints—she was so exquisite! . . . And her women-friends were distinguished; her men-friends illustrious; her lover (for she had another lover) the most illustrious soldier of his day.

Maurice de Saxe! From the moment they first met in 1721, she never thought of another man. She had closed her heart, had fancied herself invulnerable. D'Argental had been nobly repulsed; she was sure that at last she had escaped from love. Maurice de Saxe appeared—and all was lost. "She felt as if she was loving for the first time," and she *was* loving for the last. Amid turmoil and miseries and his countless infidelities, she adored him to the very moment of her death; and he preserved for her what was in him an enduring attachment—they were more or less *liés* for nine whole years! . . . What shall we say of Maurice de Saxe? The natural son of the Elector of Saxony (Frederick-Augustus, afterwards King of Poland) and Aurora de Königsmark, a lovely Swedish girl, he had all the brilliancy, vitality, and magnetism from of old attributed to an illicit origin. He was the greatest soldier of his day, the greatest libertine, the greatest adventurer. His looks were dazzling, his manner fascinating: *une brusquerie familière*—that trick of all great seducers! He was four years younger than she, but he had been in the field, in every sense of the word, since his early 'teens. He had even been married, but that of course had not lasted. Born near a throne, he was always ambitious of one; and this it was which in 1725 made the first break in their *liaison*. From 1721 to 1724, they lived blissfully: the frail dainty woman, and the Don Juan who could break horse-shoes like biscuits between his fingers! But inaction began to pall; Maurice grew restive, Adrienne peevish, exacting, tearful. He was unfaithful too, quite openly. . . . Something had to happen; and what happened was that the Duchy of Courland was offered for sale. Maurice rushed off to buy it, and found that the widow of the late Duke, Anna Ivanovna, was prepared, once she beheld him, to throw herself in with the Duchy. He was undeterred—even marriage might be endured if he were a ruling monarch!

Not only so, but he opened negotiations with another lady as well, the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth Petrovna. She was the daughter (as Anna Ivanovna was the niece) of Peter the Great. Neither knew his double game.

But the devoted Adrienne at Paris knew at any rate a part of it: she knew that if he succeeded, she must inevitably lose him. Nevertheless, when money began to run short, she sold her jewels and sent the 40,000 *livres* they brought to Maurice. . . . Were men different in those days—or was it only he who was different? He was the born adventurer; and his life, after Adrienne's death, relieves us of any sense of severity in saying that we believe him to have been the born "outsider" as well. Not only Adrienne was helping: several other silly women were wearing no jewellery just then—and there were two possible wives on the *tapis*! One knows not to which of them all the incident is most humiliating; but at any rate, the whole thing was a failure—Courland slipped through his fingers, so did Anna and Elizabeth, so, we may be sure, did Adrienne's money, so did everything, in fact, except devoted Adrienne herself. He came back in October, 1728, to her arms—and to the old troubles. He was as cross as a bear; she, as patient as an angel, most intolerably patient. . . . He *had* to "go on" until he aroused her, and at last we find this letter to poor faithful d'Argental: "I am beside myself, with rage and misery. It is natural to cry out against such perfidy. This man ought to know me, ought to love me. . . . O my God! what are we—what *are* we?" (*O mon Dieu, qu'est-ce que de nous?*)

She broke down under it in the end. The libertine and the sentimentalist make a bad pair. He was bored, she was worried, to death; and finally, the Duchesse de Bouillon, the most disreputable great lady of her day, intervened. She fixed her facile fancy (she was everybody's game) upon Maurice, and Maurice was as facile as herself. There were terrible scenes with Adrienne: they culminated at that famous performance of *Phèdre*, when she spoke the insulting lines right into the Duchess's face.

"Je ne suis point de ces femmes hardies
Qui, goûtant dans le crime une honteuse paix,
Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais."

The house broke into uproarious applause; the Duchess indignantly left her box. . . . One speculates upon what Maurice de Saxe did!

When on Monday, March 20, 1730, Adrienne Lecouvreur died after a few days' illness, all the world whispered that word so sinister to our ears, but then almost a commonplace: *Poison.* Poison in a bouquet, in a lozenge, in an injection . . . whichever it was, the poison was put there, they said, by the Duchess or her agents. The lozenge she had indeed already tried. Of that there is no reasonable doubt at all. The little hump-backed Abbé Bouret, Miniaturist, was in prison at that precise moment for having been her tool. Paris was still shuddering from the scandal. . . . But these very facts help in a measure to exclude the Duchess from the ultimate tragedy. However eagerly she might desire Adrienne's death, prudence must have prevented her from trying again so soon. Moreover, for years the actress's health had been miserably bad. Among the other little moans, this had sounded intermittently. "I haven't had twelve hours' health since I saw you." . . . "*Ma santé me désespère.*" . . . And the ailment to which her death was officially attributed had already nearly killed her in 1725–6. This was dysentery—and it was of dysentery that she died. It attacked her with appalling suddenness on March 15th, during the performance of Voltaire's *Œdipe*, in which she played Jocaste. Her suffering was such that no one could fail to observe it, yet she bravely—and brilliantly—got through not only her part in the tragedy, but also that in the following comedy. Then she was carried home, "so weak that she could not raise her arms," and died four days later. "She went out like a candle."

Maurice de Saxe, Voltaire ("her admirer, friend, and lover," as he said of himself) and d'Argental were with her during her illness; yet there were horrible scenes—curious folk besieging the room, servants plundering everywhere, and worst of all, that too-frequent churlish priest. This time, it was Languet de Gergy, "insolent, maladroit, obstinate." She was exhorted to renounce and repent of her theatrical career before the last rites could be accorded her. She refused; the Jesuit insisted. Weary, and revolting against this death, this destiny, she stretched her

arms, with one of the old lovely gestures, towards a bust which stood near, and cried—her last cry of passion: "*Voilà mon univers, mon espoir, et mon Dieu!*" The bust was one of Maurice de Saxe.

All the world knows the scandal of her interment. Christian burial was refused, but that was nothing new for an unrepentant actor or actress; the unprecedented horror in her case was that any burial whatever was also refused. Her body was taken wrapped in a sheet, at midnight, in a cab to a piece of waste land near the Seine and buried there "*au milieu des chantiers,*" then covered with quick-lime and left—the place unmarked by stone or stick. D'Argental discovered it in 1786: it was at the south-east angle of the Rues de Grenelle and de Bourgogne—now 115, Rue de Grenelle. He put up a marble tablet inscribed with verses *qui sentent le vieillard*, says somebody unkindly. . . . This is the great mystery of her sad, illustrious life. It certainly seems to point to hushing-up, to determination to make a second autopsy impossible. There had been one, and death by natural causes had been the verdict. Languet de Gergy's reputation, evil as it is, falls short of this kind of brutality: yet there is that strange letter from Maurepas, then Minister for Paris, to the Lieutenant of Police: "If they persist in refusing burial to her, *as seems likely*, she must be taken away to-night and interred with as little scandal as possible." . . . No one will ever know, or understand more clearly. At the time, nothing was done. Voltaire tried to stir up feeling, did for a time succeed, but it died away; Maurice de Saxe, who could have done everything—his influence was incalculable—did nothing.

She was only thirty-eight, and one of the wonders of Paris. "My lord," wrote d'Allainval (under the name of George Wink to an anonymous English peer), "if I remember rightly, you reckon that there are four marvels in Paris: 1st, the Tuileries; 2nd, the acting of Mlle. Lecouvreur." . . .

"Celle qui dans la Grèce aurait eu des autels,"

wrote Voltaire passionately in his fine poem on her death—

"Sitôt qu'elle n'est plus, ellè est donc criminelle ;
Elle a charmé le monde et vous l'en punissez !"

D'Argental would not see her after death. "Let me remember her as she really was!"—and he kept her portrait always in his room until he died.

Maurice de Saxe? "On coming out of her house after having heard her last sigh"—Maurice de Saxe hurried off to sell her horses. "The natural action of a horsey man," says Larroumet, no doubt with a thread of irony. . . But let us give another trait. Voltaire had written her some lines :

"Faites le bien d'un seul et le désir de tous !
Et puissent vos amours égaler la durée
De la pauvre amitié que mon cœur a pour vous."

She had shown them proudly to "*le seul*"—perhaps given him the copy. He made use of them in later years—passing them off as his own—in a letter to Justine Favart, the victim of one of his most scoundrelly intrigues. The natural action of an amorous man? At any rate, it sums up Maurice de Saxe. We think of that cry of the supreme actress of her day upon her death-bed :

"*Voilà mon univers, mon espoir, et mon Dieu!*"

and know not how to be pitiful, for anger—nor how to be angry, for pity.

MARIA-FELICITA GARCIA

"MALIBRAN"

1808–1836

PEOPLE passing, about 1817, through the Rue Neuve Saint-Marc in Paris, would often be horrified to hear piercing shrieks coming from the upper window of a certain house. Their inquiries would be answered by the *habitués* with a shrug: "Oh, that's nothing! Only Garcia making his pupils sing." "Manuel Garcia?" "That's it" . . . And then, those who had seen and heard the famous tenor would recall the effect he had made upon them, and shrug too. For Garcia was a desperate-looking ruffian—"more like a Cossack soldier than an opera-lover." Immensely broad, overwhelmingly athletic, common-featured: the best Othello of his day, and no wonder, for he understood fury better than he understood anything else in the world, except singing. He came of a great Spanish family, in which some biographers say that there was a hint of Jewish blood—that guarantee of talent, especially in music; and he was indeed a magnificent singer, one of those teachers too who either find or make the great voices of the world.

He made his daughter Maria's voice. It was not "there" at all in the beginning. They would look at one another—she and he; and he would say, "Your voice must come out in the end; it's there! I feel it, I divine it." And she, as strenuous as he, as intensely musical, and with the additional incentive of being desperately afraid of the appalling man, would begin again the struggle with her intractable voice. He was her creator, so to speak. "There is no such word as *Cannot*; to fail is merely want of perseverance," he would say curtly to the gasping Maria,

as the poor child tried her best—which was so very bad that once, after a long day's work, Manuel growled, "You'll never do for anything but the chorus." She tossed her head: "I have more talent than *you*," she said, with the foolhardiness of terror.

Truly Malibran's voice went through Purgatory—but the Heaven it attained was worth it all.

Strangely-fathered, strangely-mothered little girl that she was! Her mother, Joaquina Sitchès, was a mystical melancholy creature, who had been snatched from the cloister—ardently self-chosen—by one meeting with bull-necked, golden-voiced Garcia! As soon as they were married, she became a singer, actress, dancer—anything he willed; yet he was never kind nor pleased nor satisfied. Maria and her mother suffered deeply; she said in after-years to her friend, the Comtesse de Merlin: "Such was the effect of an angry look from my father that I am sure I might have jumped off the roof of the house without hurting myself!"

These unhappy childhoods have a wonderful way of issuing in greatness: character working in its mysterious fashion upon character. Violent temper, inherited by one who for years endures its devastating effects, develops not seldom into an iron self-control. "*That* at any rate I will not be." The vehement repudiation is as passionate as the wrath which calls it forth—but already the deviation from type has begun, and all the force is unimpaired. We get a Malibran, for instance—that fiery angel! Flame, rising from the nethermost pit, encircled her through most of her life, and the element was after all her own. Her wings could bathe in it, and could lift her again towards the skies, unscathed; for she, who knew her voice only after long conflict, knew life no differently. To speak of Malibran as ever having done anything easily is to defame her! Ernest Legouvé, in his delightful little sketch of her, sees this strenuous quality, and gently derides the beautiful verse of De Musset, where the great voice is spoken of with the *phrases de circonstance*. It "soars", it is like a "light perfume," it is "fresh and sonorous." No, says Legouvé—it did and was none of

these. It was like gold which has to be *dug out*. Did he not one day hear her practising for *Il Barbiere*, and did not the voice prove recalcitrant—and did she not stop and speak to it: "You *shall* obey me! . . . Oh, you know," turning to her visitor, "my voice and I are old enemies!"

Born in Paris, in 1808, she came to London with her family in 1818; they lived at No. 31, Gerrard Street. She made her first appearance on the stage as "one of that unhappy troupe, the chorus of the Italian Opera in London." The troop is perhaps no more unhappy than its patient audience—it looks self-satisfied enough; but we may be sure that Maria Garcia was not one of its more complacent members. For by this time, her voice was found: "a mezzo-soprano, *managed so well*," (mark that) "that one would think she had three diapasons. She can sing contralto also." Beautiful quality—beautiful method; her shake prodigious . . . had not Garcia and Maria conquered! It was in 1823 that London was made aware of all this. She was only fifteen when one night there was a catastrophe at the Opera. The sublime Pasta was singing only on alternate nights, and Madame Ronzi de Begnis, her alternative, had suddenly fallen ill: the *Barbiere* was announced for that evening—who was to sing the exacting part of Rosina? Caradori would not, Vestris would and then would not; the manager tore his hair, as managers seem to spend most of their time in doing. His distracted eye fell upon Garcia's little daughter. Could *she*——? Garcia answered for her that she could; and she did, brilliantly. That exquisite hypercritic, Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, heard her on the trial-night, and the only word of disapproval that he had to say was on the score of prematureness. Surely such precocity must damage her future career? A future career, hinted at by Mount-Edgcumbe, was enough: Maria Garcia had had her first triumph. Two years later she made her *début* as acknowledged prima-donna in the same part, and was instantly engaged for the rest of the season—£500 for six weeks.

When the season was over, Garcia left, taking his family with him, for New York. He had engaged an Italian troupe, but he

and his daughter were the stars—and Maria soon justified that young angry retort, "I have more talent than you!" by becoming *the* star. The enthusiasm in New York was frenetical; her singing, her acting, all herself, were acclaimed as something hitherto unknown. And that, indeed, all through her career, was the cry about Malibran: "There is no one else like her!" Plainly there never has been any one else like her. What we read of Grisi, even of Jenny Lind, is cold, is indifferent, compared with what we read of Malibran. A glory that was thrilling with romance, beauty answered by beauty: gondolas and silver trumpets in Venice, the very hearts of the people stirred; her house surrounded till daybreak (after *La Sonnambula*) by the enraptured Bolognese; the Naples audience rising *en masse* when she sang in *Norma*; the stability of the Scala Theatre in Milan endangered by the tumult of delight; gold and silver bouquets raining on the stage, gold and silver medals struck in her honour; the Royal Salute from the guard in attendance at another Italian theatre; a bust of her enthroned before the Opera-House in Bologna; a torch-light procession "of young nobles", yet again in Venice, and two gondoliers bringing her a gilt cup filled with wine: "Will she touch it with her lips before they carry it out to their comrades?" And she goes out on the balcony of her house, and there, with the flaming torches for her footlights, she pledges Italy in Italy's Red Wine! . . . Jenny Lind's silver candlesticks, Jenny Lind's silver tea-service—so useful—seem a little Teutonic in their excellent domesticity, do they not? after that glorious, useless Latin folly!

And the most delightful part was, perhaps, that she so loved it all. No shrinking airs from her—with open hands she caught her glory to her heart: "Thank you! thank you!" No pretence from Malibran: fame was what she had wanted, and fame was glorious, glorious. "I never have a mask": indeed she never had. Read her letter from Naples in 1834: "I am the happiest of women! My health is perfect, and as to the fatigues of the theatre, they are like a *sorbet* to me. My voice is Stentorian, my body Falstaffian, my appetite Cannibalesque." And again: "Do you know why I'm gay? Because it's lovely weather, and I feel the spring in myself! . . . Do come and

bring the German paper—we'll read it together, for it takes two heads to read a German paper!"

We maintain that only the great natures are capable of this surrender to delight. People are so afraid of joy! But Malibran was not afraid: joy, strange for long, strange always in some aspects, was nevertheless, whenever it did arrive, ardently welcomed by—itself!

She could not have been like that, though, had she not known too intimately joy's shadow, pain. That came to her quickly, by the road which is so often its road to these impassioned natures: marriage. Only for one thing could she thank her first husband: his name, that most perfect singer's name—Malibran! Never can we separate it from Maria Garcia—though *she* dismissed it so far as might be from her life, and struggled to be known as Madame de Bériot. It was not to be: she had crowned the first name with too immortal a glory. The name deserved it: no more can be said for Eugene, who began by being "*mon cher petit chou*," when he was fifty, and she eighteen!

He appeared in 1826, during Garcia's American season, and brought bad luck with him. He was reputed to be one of the richest merchants in New York, his manners were distinguished, he had a good social position—and she was more and more tormented by her father's violence. The household was unhappy: would it not be well for one at least to escape? But neither Garcia nor the mother favoured Malibran's suit. Maria, with her full inheritance of obstinacy and energy and vivid imagination, thought she saw a happy independence within her grasp: it would be better to be one elderly man's darling than another elderly man's slave. She "did everything" to marry Eugene. He kept the letters she wrote him before and after their marriage, and M. Martial Teneo communicated them to the world through a musical magazine in 1899. They are not the most attractive things we know of our Maria; very much we wish that she had never written them. "Petit chou, tu es un chat; petit amour, tu es un ange . . . Petit minet, ne m'aimes-tu pas?

Bm, bm, bm—voilà trois baisers" . . . "A very Spanish *fiancée*," remarks Teneo drily; and when they became actually engaged, the tone grows almost fulsome. "O bonheur! vous m'épousez. Je ne puis croire à tant de bonheur—une pauvre fille sans talent." The "poor untalented girl" ought to have been well whipped. . . . "You took my hand when I was going away—and joy kept me awake all night. My heart got as big as the whole world!"

That last phrase is more like her. The ardent heart was always ready to get as big as the whole world, for the ardent imagination knew no bounds. She imagined herself into her parts; and she imagined herself into love with rich, conventional, well-mannered, secretive and deceptive Eugene Malibran, who, after making brilliant promises to herself and her reluctant parents—went bankrupt within a few weeks of their marriage, which took place on March 25, 1826. He must of course have been aware that this was impending, and Garcia's fury knew no bounds. Certainly there was room to suspect sinister motives—the gold-mine he had in his wonderful young wife! Without delay, that gold-mine was exploited. The poor girl soon found herself alone with the defaulting husband, for Garcia swept himself off in a whirlwind of wrath to Mexico, and took all his belongings with him. Already, no doubt, disenchantment with Eugene had set in, for was she not all originality, ambition, fervour, while Malibran was cold, conventional, narrow-minded—and the bankruptcy may have seemed to her a blessing in disguise, since it forced her into the activity which brings forgetfulness of feeling. The disillusion of sentiment dwindled before the material *déception*; work was imperative now—that work from which Eugene had been so solicitous to shield her! She threw herself into it heart and soul. She actually got a troupe together, learnt English and studied English music, that she might not be dependent on Italian singers only—and thus helped her family, paid her husband's debts: indomitable, strenuous, rejoicing in difficulty, rejecting the word *limit*: "I've been trying to catch that note for months—and I caught it just as I was putting on my shoes this morning!"

When New York was "sung dry", she went to Paris—the husband acquiescing, and staying where he was. In Paris she

was at once befriended by the lovely Creole, Mercedès, Comtesse de Merlin (once a pupil of Garcia), who had, among amateurs, an illustrious voice. Mercedès eagerly welcomed the dark-haired slender girl, gave a party for her, whither she came with her voice and her atmosphere of romance and passion, and set the room ablaze with enthusiasm. She sang, accompanying herself at the piano, the pure line of her head and shoulders standing out in that most becoming of all postures. Very pure indeed was the line—her hair in the flat smooth bands which she always adopted, when extravagant coiffures were the mode ; her "rather large mouth, rather short nose" detracting from perfect beauty, until you looked at the eyes—and forgot all else in the face. Those eyes had an atmosphere ; they were dark with reverie, charged with passion, the eyes of one who would die young—haunting, sibylline, immeasurably sad . . . And she sang the Willow-Song from *Otello*! Legouvé (at last officially a music-lover) "felt like a man going up in a balloon." For long he had striven against the absurdest family tradition: his father had disliked music and had a cracked voice, and so it was considered disloyal to his memory to care for music. Young Legouvé had made some attempts. He had gone to the Opera, and had said timidly, on his return, "Il me semble que j'aime la musique ?" "Mais non!" he was instantly reminded. "Ton père avait la voix fausse!" For a year or so, he submitted ; then broke out again, "J'aime la musique, moi! j'aime la musique,"—and this time, stuck to his guns! But hitherto his experiences had been quite ordinary—now, he was listening to Malibran. "She was an *Initiator*!" he cries, "an Illuminator of the Soul! We did not understand, but now we understand ; we did not love, but now we love!"

She sang first at the Grand Opera—the French house—in *Semiramide*. It was a popular triumph, but the critics had faults to find. Fétis, the dragon of the *Revue Musicale*, was very angry with her. "She has everything to ensure success, but her singing is utterly devoid of taste and method ; she uses far too much ornament ; her breathing is badly managed." . . . There was truth in this. Sometimes, in the struggle with the rebel-voice, she fell into exaggeration in the effort to win ; and

MADAME GARCIA MALIBRAN

From an Old Print

in these evil days she wanted success so badly that she descended to gallery-tricks to gain it. Paris soon cured her of all that; no longer did she mix her styles like a salad, no longer did she indulge in meaningless ornament—for Paris, she gladly realised, was not New York: Paris wanted the best. The relief of such a discovery to the artist's soul is incalculable. She began to feel happy, despite the crosses of her daily lot. She was housed with her husband's sister, Mme. Chastelain—spying, prying, insolent, vulgar, and avaricious; a woman who starved her servants, and exploited the generous, heedless Maria until even Maria's suspicions were awakened. "I can only calculate by tapping my fingers on my nose," she wrote to Eugene, "but even *I* can see that this is unfair. I hope you will judge me as I deserve; if you don't, I shall be sorry, but *nothing* will make me alter my arrangements." Her letters to him at this time begin by being affectionate, "*Cher petit chou*" actually still remains in her vocabulary—but gradually the tone changes, he becomes "dear Eugene"; she helps him, regards that as her duty, but hopes he will keep away. "Everyone has a reason for marrying. Mine was to be happy and tranquil . . . but *you will remember*. One can forgive, but not forget. Well, that was my motive in marrying. I would rather not know yours.' She finally left the Chastelains, and went to live with Mme. Naldi, an old friend of her mother. Such was the private life that ran alongside with the glory!

For Paris was soon entirely her own. Her Desdemona (the part she preferred to all others) created a furore. It was against the rules at the Italian Opera—where she was now engaged, having abandoned the French house—for artists to appear before the curtain. But for twenty minutes after the second act, the audience called her—the rule had to be broken: she appeared. Crowns and wreaths of flowers rained on the stage, copies of verses too—people broke into verse most wonderfully in those days! At the end of the opera, there was a regular riot: everyone was standing up and shouting. She appeared at last, and "the ladies flung every flower they wore at her feet." That was on June 25th, 1828. On July 1st, she took her benefit, and "received seventy-two bouquets and crowns."

Her acting was as remarkable as her singing. In it, too, she tended to exaggeration: Chorley, in his *Athenæum* article on her death, uses a startling phrase. "Her acting (in *Fidelio*) was not carried to that excess *which almost seemed to threaten life or reason.*" . . . There is something disquieting in such a criticism—and Chorley was no lukewarm admirer. "First among the first," he says elsewhere, "she was and is. . . . We may *notice* other performances—hers we can only *record*, for criticism, which can teach others, goes to school to Malibran."

Eccentric, restless, wayward—and frail of body: what are we to think of the woman who acted in the style described by her critic? The question arrests us. Mad she was of course called; something else she was called also. It was said that Malibran drank to excess. Untrue: of that we are convinced—but the public wants easy answers to difficult questions, and the question of Malibran's psychology was an immensely difficult one. Her eccentricity was extreme, her restlessness abnormal. "M'as-tu jamais connu tranquille? Ni moi non plus", she wrote to her husband; and what she was in private, that she was in public also. Her private life was all turmoil—dancing, riding, talking, studying: she knew everything. Her love of her own art was intense and consuming, and "she had an innate perception of beauty in every art—pictures, architecture, Latin Classics, the poetry of Dante and Goethe, the drama of England"; she spoke four languages perfectly—Spanish, French, Italian, English, and understood German well; she played the piano brilliantly, caricatured brilliantly, and—the one tranquil thing we know of her!—sewed and embroidered exquisitely. Fragile, like all such burning natures, and utterly tameless in her energy; avid of danger, angry because she could not fight for Liberty in the Revolution of 1830: "a hero's soul with no heroism to do," sums up Legouvé—"*voilà* Malibran." . . . So spontaneous! Sontag is singing more divinely than ever, one year in Paris, and Malibran hears her and glories in her, and then suddenly the great eyes fill with tears of envy: "*Pourquoi chante-t-elle si bien, mon Dieu!*" . . . The trait of jealousy in artists has its curious obsessions. One rival will triumph, and no pain is felt; another—the Destined, as it were!—can do nothing without

torturing them. Sontag played that part in Malibran's life. It was the contrast, no doubt—which might just as well have had the directly opposite effect. All was ease and purity with Sontag: her voice was like a flood of light. They were so different that rivalry was absurd, says Castil-Blaze. "Thanks to the *three*, Pasta, Malibran, and Sontag, I have heard Desdemona sung to perfection. The Roman Empire was not conquered by one General!" . . . But the really astounding *coup de destin* was that Sontag should also have been Malibran's rival in love! De Bériot had wanted to marry the lovely Henriette, and she had flirted with him and then rejected him. He had fainted, he had torn his hair, he had talked of suicide. . . . In 1830, two things happened. Sontag married the Comte de Rossi, Ambassador from the King of Sardinia at the Hague; and Malibran met De Bériot. It was a strange juxtaposition. Malibran and Sontag had sung together in public for the first time on January 8; and again, on the day of Sontag's farewell (January 18)—one of those duets of whose "fantastic and ideal perfection" Castil-Blaze speaks. Sontag, gathering the crowns which were thrown to both, but which Malibran and she alternately (in the absurd delicious convention which enchants us all at the Opera!) heaped into the other's arms—Sontag felt the tears fill her eyes, an agony of regret contract her heart. Friends consoled her. "*Maintenant, vous êtes comtesse!*" "*Oui—mais j'étais reine!*" She had abdicated, and Malibran reigned alone. De Bériot, not yet *suicidé*, moped, but played divinely on his fiddle; Malibran's warm heart went out to him—he played so beautifully, he was so unhappy. . . . She fell in love at first sight. "I will never play the coquette!" she had once declared, and she did not now. When she and De Bériot met again the same year in Brussels, she "let him know she loved him"—and De Bériot acquiesced. By 1831, they were lovers.

And now, for the first time, we find our fearless Maria afraid of something. Since she had ceased to see her father, she had forgotten what fear was like. Now she was afraid—of public opinion! The *liaison* was kept profoundly secret at first; and the first serious quarrel arose from De Bériot's disdain for the

gossip which to her was a nightmare. He was going to Russia on a professional engagement, and he asked her to go with him. The proposal horrified her. He ought to have been more careful of her reputation, she thought. Her feeling issued in a quarrel which was patched up by his sending, as a farewell-gift before starting, a magnificent harp. She instantly learned to play upon it, and thenceforth accompanied herself in the Willow-Song in *Otello*. But De Bériot blundered again on his return. This time he invited her to Brussels, where he was then playing—and baited the hook with the offer of a lucrative engagement. Again she was furious, and as they were actually lovers, it was not reasonable, De Bériot thought—with some justification. He said so, and he prevailed. She went to Brussels; soon they built a beautiful house at Ixelles, "and were never separated afterwards."

But it was not all happiness yet. That spectre of public opinion irrelevantly haunted Maria. Of all women, one would have said in one's haste that she would be the last to care for the *qu'en dira-t-on*. On reflection, however, one sees that her very violence of eccentricity in imagination, her abnormality, her effervescence were, in a sense, the reasons for this apparent incongruity. Everything was "keyed up" by her exuberant fancy. Where a calmer-natured woman would have rested in her own sense of justification, and shrugged her shoulders at the gossip or the fancied coldness—Malibran's vehement heart was stirred to its depths by the sense of degradation. She saw an insult everywhere, and wept bitterly at the thought of such a thing; she frantically strove against the publicity which grew daily more inevitable—"she would not sing, she could not sing" . . . and then, like lightning, "Yes, she would! for then the public could never think that *she*—" . . . And lo! at the end of the first act of *Semiramide*, she locks herself into her room: "I will not sing again!" She did not sing again, and the angry audience remembered it against her for long.

So, with periods of joy, the private life ran until the long-sought divorce from Eugene was obtained. In 1833, the year of the great tour in Italy with Lablache, her son had been born—Charles Wilfrid "de Bériot." That had accelerated matters, but

there had been international puzzles, questions of Eugene's citizenship. . . . At last, in 1836, freedom and happiness came.

She married De Bériot the same year, on March 26th. That night, she heard Thalberg play for the first time—and Thalberg heard her sing. It was an electrifying evening. "Oh, madame! oh, madame!" stammered Thalberg, utterly overcome; and she interrupted his playing with her sobs. They had to carry her away, but she came back in five minutes. "Now it's my turn!" And then Thalberg wept. . . . Well! it was wonderful. "One only gets married once in one's life!" she cried—could anything be more Malibranesque? Eugene was forgotten as if he had never been.

Later in the year, she came to London. Among her favourite amusements was riding: De Bériot disliked this, "but he knew it would be useless to oppose." She went out one day in April on a fiery, borrowed horse. She had not ridden for some time, and this, combined with her state of health, made her nervous. The horse ran away; she fell, and was dragged along a stony road for thirty yards, her head beating against the flints all the time. She was fearfully cut and bruised, but so soon as she recovered consciousness, her one thought was to keep the knowledge of her accident from De Bériot. "I will perform this evening as usual." She told him she had fallen downstairs, and she sang that night! She would consult no doctor. Headaches became frequent—nervous attacks, too. The great Lablache, one of her dearest friends, grew terribly uneasy. Though she was sometimes happy and gay, her spirits alternated wildly: everything pointed to a lesion of the brain.

In September, she returned to England for the Manchester Festival. From the very day of her arrival there, she seemed doomed. There were hysterics, fainting-fits—then exquisite singing—then more fainting-fits. "She looked like a beautiful spectre: her face was full of suffering and melancholy." . . . On September 13th, she sang the Duet from *Andronica*, "Vanne se alberghi in petto," with Madame Caradori, and executed "a fearful shake at the top of her voice"—on the high B flat, in fact. It electrified the audience; they demanded an encore. If they had seen her, fainting in the wings! and seen

how gradually the uproar of applause broke through the merciful unconsciousness, and the great eyes opened darkly. . . . "Do they want me again? If I sing, I am a dead woman." "Do not sing," said Sir George Smart, "I will make your excuses to the audience." "No! I will sing"; and she sang that tremendous shake again, more "fearfully" even than before—and in ten days from that thirteenth of September, Malibran was dead.

"Cœur d'ange et de lion, libre oiseau de passage,
Espiègle enfant ce soir, sainte artiste demain!

Qu'as-tu fait pour mourir, ô noble créature,
Belle image de Dieu, qui donnais en chemin
Au riche un peu de joie, au malheureux du pain.

C'est ton âme, Ninette, et ta grandeur naïve,
C'est cette voix du cœur qui seule au cœur arrive,
Que nul autre, après toi, ne nous rendra jamais.

Le Ciel de ses élus devient-il envieux?
Ou faut-il croire, hélas! ce que disaient nos pères,
Que lorsqu'on meurt si jeune on est aimé des dieux!"

"I shall die young," she had said long since, and perhaps the gods were kind. Voice or woman must die—that is the singer's doom; and Malibran would never have submitted to the death of her voice, which, worn by its own intractability, would have died sooner than other women's. "She would have been sure to struggle: a desperate combat, a heart-rending spectacle it would have been," says Legouvé. And De Musset sang of her death and of herself in those lovely, imperishable verses.

So we try to console ourselves, it may be. . . . But she was only twenty-eight!

GIULIA GRISI

1808–1869

"THE Italians have brought back to us the season of cavatinas, bouquets, delightful evenings—that charming season when the *dilettanti* are in their seventh heaven, clapping their hands as a bird claps its wings . . . and passionately exalting each his favourite tenor or prima-donna."

So wrote some one in the *Revue des deux Mondes* for October 15, 1840, when there re-appeared at the Italian Opera House in Paris the most wonderful vocal quartette that the musical world has ever seen. Lablache the incomparable; Tamburini, the "legendary baritone"; and, in 1840, Mario, that sort of fairy-prince of the Opera, who had succeeded to Rubini, the king of tenors. The contrast between them was precisely that between a king and a fairy-prince. Round Giuseppe Mario, Marquis de Candia, a halo of romance hung shimmering—and still hangs.

The lady of the quartette was Giulia Grisi, then thirty-eight years old. She had been singing almost ever since she could speak. Niece of the famous Grassini, (who had been the Queen of Song in Paris in 1798,) she was already "talked about" at twelve. Milan was her birthplace, as one feels it ought to be of all great singers: in 1808 she followed her sister, Giuditta, into the world which was to be for both the world of song. Judith and Julia—the names already announce themselves; and Judith was, we read, an even finer vocalist than her far more famous younger sister. Does not this at once arrest us? What is the secret of Julia's more glittering career?

It is easy to say—Luck: the "accident of time", which included her in that renowned quartette. But one likes to think that it was something more personal: beauty, (she had great

beauty,) tragic genius, character—in the genuine, not the vulgar, sense of the word. Yet with a great singer's "character", in that sense, we feel instinctively that the public has nothing to do. How little one ever knows of it, how little for that matter—and oddly enough—one ever even thinks of it! Hearing them, watching them, hardly at all do we speculate. "What kind of woman? what kind of man?" No. Their personal privacy is almost cloistral; if gossip concerns itself with them—but even gossip is partly baffled—it speaks always only of externals. *What they do*—never, one might almost say, is *what they are*, its theme. And as this is true of contemporary singers, so it was true of Giulia Grisi. Much was written of her singing, of her personal beauty, at the time of her supremacy: nothing of her character. Perhaps the Opera is our modern legend; certainly the stars seem almost as remote as the actual constellations: "Twinkle, twinkle, little Star—How I wonder what you are!"

Her professional career began at twenty, in a forgotten opera by Rossini; then for four years she enchanted Bologna, Florence, Pisa—waiting for Milan and La Scala. At last the great night came: she appeared as Adalgisa ("creating" the part) to the Norma of Pasta. She triumphed; and then, Milan conquered, Paris became the dream of the future. At twenty-four (1832) she realised it: at the Italian Opera she appeared on October 16, as Semiramide, in Rossini's work of that name. She was desperately nervous, but again she triumphed. The *Journal des Débats* had an enthusiastic article: "Her brilliant mezzo-soprano voice, so true, so firm . . . her noble bearing, the grace and truthfulness of her gestures, her charming head, carried so proudly on that neck which painters and sculptors would compare to a swan's . . . these are the many advantages which have helped to achieve so great a success." From that time she was the idol of Paris—Paris, the queen of taste! There remained only London; and to London she came in April, 1834, making her *début* at the King's Theatre as Ninetta in *La Gazza Ladra*, a now neglected opera by Rossini. Julie Grisi—so she styled herself, in acknowledgment of the Paris hearts; la *jolie* Grisi

they retorted, "to distinguish her from her sister," as the London *Athenæum* unkindly reports.

"It is long since we have seen so triumphant an appearance upon the boards. . . . Her looks are sufficient to make a favourable first impression; her voice and style and (perhaps above all) acting, confirm it; all three leave little or nothing to be wished. . . . Her execution is indeed at times exuberant—the duet-cadence in the prison-scene with Rubini, we must protest against as out of place and out of taste. . . . She possesses first-rate powers as an actress; to be brief, we prefer her Ninetta to any we have seen, and long to see her in other parts—Desdemona, for instance." So wrote Chorley of the *Athenæum*. But alas! when Chorley did see her in Desdemona, he was disappointed. "Parts of her performance were excellent"; (to think that there was once a time when that phrase could be used in serious writing!) "but in other places energy and *abandon* were wanting. . . . It is possible that, like most of our contemporaries, we may have over-rated a little the power of this delightful actress." However, when in the same week she appeared in *Don Giovanni*, as Donna Anna, "she sang and acted herself back into our first opinion of her." In July, we find the *Athenæum* still staunch to that first opinion: she appeared in *Il Barbiere* and "seemed to act from the inspiration of the moment. . . . Worn-out as the opera is, it is worth coming any distance to see it with its present cast." At the close of the season, the summing-up was that Grisi's Ninetta was "her best and only faultless serious effort. Her Rosina in *Il Barbiere* left us nothing to wish. In other parts there were brilliant points, but a want of sustained energy. . . . We look forward with confidence to a day when she may challenge a Pasta or a Schrœder on their own ground, without the chance of a defeat. . . . As to voice, and skill in the management of it, she has nothing to desire or to learn."

So there is London; and now—what is left? Nothing more can be done with our voice; our face, our form, both are perfect —*la bellissima, la jolie*: these are phrases of which we have had a surfeit. In this way it was, no doubt, as suggested by a writer in *Le Monde Dramatique*, that Grisi became too eager for praise as an actress. "May we hint to our beautiful *diva* that flattery

is fatal to pretty women as well as to Kings! We ruined Pasta and Malibran by over-praising their acting. Undoubtedly, Grisi is a born actress—but a woman's physique is not strong enough to stand the double strain of acting and singing. Carried away by her dramatic instinct, Grisi now sometimes sings out of tune." What did she do, one speculates? Did she content herself with the marvels of her voice, or did she continue to force the dramatic note? Her acting must have been delightful. The same writer elsewhere describes it as a mixture of "naïve childish grace, of Italian impetuosity, of audacity, of pride, of musical enthusiasm." . . . This rhapsody was thrown off by Henri Blanchard in a most amusing article upon the regrettable habit which actresses had acquired of getting married. "It is the ruination of the drama—this craze for getting married. Marriage, that microbe which kills every delightful fancy! When I hear our lovely Grisi—can't you see how that very word '*our*' permits, even encourages, hopes?—I tell myself that she's free, that she's an artist, that she's sure to be capricious, like every other pretty woman . . . and then, perhaps, in an interval, her eye catches mine—she sees how I appreciate, how I adore her . . . and I say to myself '*Perhaps . . . why not?*' You can call me an unmentionable kind of idiot, if you like—what do I care? Well, suppose next day, I get a great copper-plate letter, telling me that Grisi is going to be married! What do I do? I abjure music; I never set foot in the Italian Opera again!"

This was certainly very entertaining, and had a marked influence upon Grisi's conduct. The very next year (1836), when she was twenty-eight, she married, in London, Monsieur Gérard de Melcy! But Henri Blanchard was not forced too long to absent himself from the Opera: in two years, Melcy had a duel with Lord Castlereagh "*à cause de Grisi*"; and shortly after that, the married pair were separated. Melcy's career was short, and remains obscure, though every Frenchman, at any rate, can predict the fate of "the diva's husband"—cloaks over his arm while he waits in the wings, hot-water bottles, draught-protectors, contracts, *impresarii . . . une vie d'enfer*! . . . And so little Grisi, with the imperious raven head, could once more, if she wanted to, awaken delicious hopes in Henri Blanchard's

JULIE GRISI

From an Old Print

too-sophisticated heart, when their eyes met in an interval and she saw that he adored her.

But indeed, what if we were to compare dates? what if we were to find that in 1838, just two years after the Melcy-marriage, there appeared at the Académie Royale de Musique—the Fairy-Prince!

There was a handsome young officer singing—like many another of his comrades—in Parisian drawing-rooms in 1836. He was twenty-six, he was extraordinarily good-looking; but there were probably others like him in these respects also. There was just one enormous difference. This handsome young officer had one of the most ravishing tenor voices that the world has ever heard. Fresh, pure, velvety, "full of *morbidezza*"—a voice incomparable among amateurs. And then, his grace, his high-bred air, his beauty. . . . Paris is a-flutter, when one fine day, what happens? The Management of the Opera comes, of its own accord, to ravish the ravishing voice! Actually the Directors approached him—the drawing-room amateur—with an offer of 1500 francs a month, if he would take to the stage. And so the descendant of the Dukes of Candia, "impelled by an irresistible vocation," became a professional singer. He made his *début* at the Académie Royale de Musique on December 2nd, 1838, in the name-part of *Robert le Diable*, acting as M. de Candia—soon, however, altered to Mario. His success was instantaneous: how, indeed, could he have failed! "The handsome dark-eyed singer, with his clear-cut profile and his graceful figure, conquered the house at once." . . . And the conquerors conquered one another. They were married some time after 1848; but long before that, they were lovers, rivalling one another only in mutual adoration. That most perfect, and most rare, of all unions was theirs—similarity of aim, equal success, unclouded and unenvious joy in one another's glories.

The glories fell in showers—it was wonderful! Grisi, who had "created" Adalgisa, in Bellini's *Norma*, soon became the great Norma of her day. "From the moment she appeared with the golden sickle, her brow crowned with vervain, her rapt look communing with the skies, it became impossible to imagine anyone else in the part." The sweet melancholy grace of her *Casta*

Diva, "when from her lips it scarcely drips—the echo of sweet singing" (she especially affected the *chant à demi-voix*) combined with her exquisite acting to make the perfect Norma. In *I Puritani*, that much-decried opera by Bellini's dying hand, she made a real furore. The famous Polacca, *Son vergin vezzosa*, sent London quite mad. It was heard at every concert, sometimes three or four times a day, with wild enthusiasm; then the same people would come again to the Opera to listen to it. And there, again, her histrionic gift! In the first acts, her "girlish and buoyant happiness"; in the concluding ones, her "wayward and passionate melancholy"—this must indeed have been something very different from the operatic acting with which we are acquainted! Her personal beauty too was really extraordinary: it was the thing in which she was superior to all other artists. In *Lucrezia Borgia* (at Mario's London *début* in 1839), for instance, "she put on for the character such a malicious and fascinating beauty as befits a witch." Taglioni danced after the opera that night—so they had a Witch, and a Sylph, and a Fairy-Prince.

Great nights: now-a-nights, difficult to imagine. *Ensemble* we do not now boast at the opera. If we have a fine tenor, a fine soprano, a fine anything, we are nearly off our heads; in those days, the *Athenæum* grumbled at the chorus. If *we* began to grumble at our chorus—! But indeed we are good-humoured: we do not grumble at all; we go mad, with the best giants of those days, over one Florentine Nightingale in a season, and humbly take the tenors we can get, and are thankful. For remember that "*Giulietta*" Grisi—as she now announced herself, and one seems to divine a love-word in the romantic change of name—had an ideal Romeo. Mario excelled in parts which demanded grace and high-breeding; his *grands seigneurs* were the Real Thing. A perfect Almaviva (*Nozze di Figaro*), he was such a Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) as no one could have dreamed of who had not seen him. And to hear him—hear that voice from Heaven, breaking into *Il mio tesoro*! In a word, it was romance incarnate behind the footlights.

"The Lyric Drama", says Castil-Blaze, in his History of the Opera-Houses of Paris, "is like a religion: everyone has his own way of looking at it." But we beg to differ from Castil-

Blaze. Italian Opera, "Star-Opera"—like a religion! Not a bit of it. On such a night, humanity breaks out in every direction, eyes are bright with all sorts of vanities and excitements. We hurry to our seats, (the corridors a-hum!) we rustle with the rest of the rustling . . . oh, that atmosphere, that movement of an expectant star-house. The parterre glitters, glistens, gleams. From a high-hung box, it may be, we look down upon the slender languid forms (every one looks slender and languid from that height), the ineffable graceful worldliness of the whole thing, the luxury implied in all these listeners assembled to hear one man or woman (or, as then, three men and one woman) display the result of years of training,—of whole lives, indeed, of sacrifice to Art and Glory! It has all been done for us to hear, and when the cavatina is over, the melting voice no more in mazes running —it is a duel between the diva and her audience for which shall render the most gracious gratitude. We lean out, we stand up, hands cannot make enough of it, so we find ourselves crying "Divine, divine!" . . . and her lips are moving, too, the smiles, the bows are not enough for her—yes! they are delightful evenings, those on which "we feel once more the adorable sensations which Italian music can give us."

For fifteen years, Giulia Grisi so reigned—a Queen of Song. Even the Jenny Lind fever, in 1847, did not dethrone her. "She could take her place," wrote Théophile Gautier, "beside Malibran on the vacant golden throne": she did take her place, literally, beside Malibran in London in 1835. They sang together at one of Benedict's Morning-Concerts. "We cannot speak of it calmly" —so Chorley panted. "It was the most splendid and inspired performance of its kind we ever heard. . . . A higher pitch of delight than we dare venture to record." That was how they could write in those days, and the unprofessional adorers would break into song:

> "O exquisite Ninetta—O lovely Giulietta!
> O nymph of raven tresses! a lost young man confesses—"

and he was assuredly a young man who found his phrases for himself, for "Her voice comes out *in mellow shout*!" he cries,

"O gracious, golden Grisi!" And so the gracious golden days and nights went on. But she was not only brilliant; she was hard-working, she was even conscientious—ugly word! which nevertheless to worried *impresarii* and directors has its beauty. "Of all the artists of the day, she was perhaps *the* one who most seldom disappointed the public on any pretext whatsoever." Lanari, her first manager, was alone in suffering from her caprice. He was a character—and a manager—of the first order: it was he who said of himself one day, "I am, after God, the first of *impresarii*," and then, reflecting, added, "Indeed, I think it may be said that, among *impresarii* I am the *True* God." After this, our heart goes out to Lanari in his every trouble; and he had many with Judith and Julia. But that was in Julia's young days, and Lanari's contract was constrictive: it kept her for four years to such parts as Adalgisa—the secondary parts. She ran away; for a long time he could not find her; the Venetians—it was from Venice that she fled—would have no one but "*la celeste Giulia.*" Lanari tore his hair, called on Bellini, on Meyerbeer, to intervene; but all in vain. He did not get her back.

"She was a bundle of nerves," observes Arditi, another *impresario* by the Grace of God. Under his direction, she and Mario sang in the latter years of their triumphs, and he has many anecdotes to tell. Grisi was frantically jealous about her Fairy-Prince; she could not bear him to be admired by other women. As he was one of the handsomest men of his time, she had many vexations. A Miss Giles, "from Gloucestershire," very rich, very sentimental, and not very young—so Grisi need not have minded—fell desperately in love with him. She followed him everywhere. No matter where he sang, Miss Giles appeared, bought her box, and every night, as soon as Arditi raised his bâton, he would see the "gaunt grey figure" sitting expectant above the stage. She would wear her filmiest laces, her costliest brocades; from above a splendid fan, her eyes would attach themselves to Mario's face and there, dead to all else, she watched and worshipped—"like a sphinx, a tremendous riddle." Grisi could not stand it. "It drives me *mad*," she cried, pinching poor unworshipped Arditi's arm black-and-blue in her nervous excitement; "I can't sing if she comes to-night!" She came—and Grisi sang;

but "if eyes could kill!" . . . The papers actually had articles upon it; but Mario was totally impervious, he cared for one woman only and that was his Giulietta. And still, and still, Miss Giles followed. Once when he was ill, she called at his hotel every morning to inquire, and when the waiter brought good news, she gave him a "double eagle." Then Mario went to America. Miss Giles appeared on board, "arrayed in lilac-silk, with a fragile breath of a bonnet, trimmed with orange-blossoms," —and when somebody asked her casually if she thought Mario handsome, she went into hysterics. . . . But Grisi could not laugh: her strenuous soul refused to see the fun. "She has the evil eye; whenever she's on our trail, we're unlucky"—and Arditi's arm suffered again. Who'd be an *impresario?* It was so plainly Mario's arm which ought to have been black-and-blue; but Mario, handsome, amiable, and amused, got off scotfree. Was Miss Giles present, we wonder, at the performance in Washington, when *Norma* was played and the weather was so cold that Grisi had to come on in a huge fur cloak, huddled up to her eyes, and Mario made his appearance holding a coachman's umbrella over his head—for the roof of the theatre had given way under a heavy fall of snow, and its coating of ice was streaming down on the artists!

Agonising at the moment, but what food for laughter in the reminiscent hours—adventures such as this and the Irish ones, when the stars descended to "plain-cooking" at the hotels which Ireland will not Gallicise. At meals, they would appear—Grisi, Mario, Giuglini, enchanting singer, but most unattractive man, Tietjens the majestic, Piccolomini (*the* Violetta of *La Traviata*), an artist of supreme attraction, though not a diva among divas; and expectantly, but not quite hopefully, they would sit down, and watch the dish-covers. "What will they disclose? Not—oh! *not* boiled fowl or veal." . . . But it was always one or the other.

Piccolomini and Giuglini were the *enfants terribles* of the troop. On Tietjens—good-natured, massive Tietjens, the destined butt —they played a cruel practical joke. She carried with her an enormous quantity of clothes, used to take a room for her wardrobe alone. And the rogues got into this room, stuffed out all the dresses, put masks on the shoulders, and seated the figures

on chairs all round—a dozen of them! Then, lights low and mysterious: Tietjens enters to choose a gown. . . . Shrieks, *épouvante*. "Did you think the ghosts of your characters had come to haunt you?"

A merry troop, merry days, and gracious golden nights, when the glorious voices came out "in mellow shout." . . . But what is this we hear? A whispered name: *Adelina Patti*! It is the Serpent in Eden.

For, alas! the Opera is peculiarly the world where the loveliest things have the shortest life. "Voices drop away like rose-leaves"; Time waits for us in the wings, frowns at us from the footlights. . . . For fifteen years to be a Queen of Song! It did not satisfy our strenuous Giulia. In 1848, she did retreat: she was only forty then. If she had but said (as Rubini had), "It is time—for it is too soon"; but instead, the energetic fiery creature said, "It is time—for it is not too late"; and gathered the dropped rose-leaves, and vehemently told herself that they made a rose. . . . Let us not follow too closely the Funeral of a Rose. "Much solicited"; "still great"; "it must have been felt to be a mistake"; "we understand that her engagement is cancelled." . . . Cruel succession of phrases, which culminates in "Will it be believed that she consents to allow herself to be announced again?" and "this undignified pertinacity." She saw the notices: think of it! Yet while we thrill to the pathos, we cannot but recall the sensations with which ourselves have heard a faded singer, and ache to remember that pity, that respect, were all too weak to vanquish the other things we did not wish to feel, yet felt—and worst of all, that detestable sense of doubt, disbelief: *Was she ever, then, so wonderful?*

Till 1866 it dragged on. Then at last she understood. She made her last appearance in *Lucrezia Borgia*—that opera in which she had displayed "the fascinating beauty of a witch," the opera which, strangely enough, had seen the last appearance of Sontag, and was to see the last appearance of Tietjens.

She retired to her "delightful house at Fulham, where Mario indulged in a mania for photography." She had two daughters (she had had four, but the two eldest had died in 1862), she had troops of distinguished friends, her Fairy-Prince, despite financial

storm and stress—he had lost nearly all his money in disastrous speculations—was still romantic, handsome, as devoted as ever. And yet we wonder—did Giulia Grisi ever know happiness again? "She went frequently to the Opera, a longing ghost." . . . *Sunt lachrymæ rerum.*

As if her loyal lover would not be superior to his Giulietta in anything, the sentence goes forth for Mario too: *He was heard too long*. In 1869, he was still singing at St. Petersburg. She was on her way to join him there, when she was suddenly taken ill at Berlin. It was inflammation of the lungs. She died on December 3, 1869, after a few days' illness. He was not able to reach her in time; and so in death they were divided—by Song, which had brought them together.

MARIE TAGLIONI

1804–9 (?)—1884

"MAN was made of a little mud and water: why should not a woman be made of dew, of rays of light, of bits of condensed rainbow?" A writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for August, 1840, quotes these words from one whose pen was active almost a century before, and adds, "The author of this phrase must have foreseen Taglioni."

Plainly there never has been, before or since, a dancer to compare with her. One of her effects upon her critics was that she drove them to vie with each other in extravagant metaphors, amusing to collect: "A drop of water on a branch of coral." "An angel returning to the sky." "The soul of a young girl, dying of love." None of these quite rings the bell. "Lighter than the gauze which the wind agitates in passing": more descriptive, but perhaps smacking of the ready-made. "Like a flake of foam"—we are getting nearer. "A feather swept from a swan by the wind." That will do: the prize for metaphor goes to this ingenious fellow.

And the comparisons! "Gazelle" was the favourite, for Taglioni walked like no other dancer on earth. "Her feather-like, snow-fall resumption of the tread of earth is beyond description. Her bound upwards is graceful and natural; it is her coming back again that is supernatural!" So said the *Athenæum*, and, this time, said better than all the rest what all the rest were trying to say.

To find a date of birth for a dew-drop, a snow-flake, bears absurdity on the face of it; and nobody has really found one for

Marie Taglioni. The guesses range between 1804 and 1809; droll Henri Blanchard (in *Le Monde Dramatique*) hints that even 1809 may be premature. Like Grisi, she inherited her actual talent from an illustrious aunt; but on both sides her relatives were distinguished. Her grandfather was a famous singer called Karsten, a great favourite of Gustav III., King of Sweden. Karsten's daughter married Philip Taglioni, who was Ballet-Master and Principal Dancer at the Stockholm Theatre. She herself was an exquisite player on the harp. . . . Why does this talent so peculiarly charm us in a great dancer's mother? We know not; we only know that it does. . . . And, as we have said, Philip Taglioni's sister was renowned: his two sisters indeed were dancers, "but so lovely that they were snatched from the boards before they could make their names." One was a dazzling beauty; she married Count Contarini, a Venetian nobleman, and people used to say that "they were going to Venice to see it and its *belle*, the lovely Countess Contarini."

La Taglioni was not a pretty woman. In *Le Monde Dramatique*, a little quaint head confronts us. The hair is dressed in the very midsummer madness of the barber: two big bows of it above the flat parting, a roulade of sausage-curls down each side. . . . Difficult, from a head like this, to disentangle the real Taglioni, but at any rate, the small resolute face below is not a beauty's. Too resolute it is for that! Never did lips more closely close, never did nose more possess the centre—and too widely; never did eyes less dewily, less enigmatically, meet our own. It is rumoured that the Sylph was a Shrew—and the portrait, alas! gives Rumour none too-convincingly the lie. A kind of dainty, stubborn—if necessary, ruthless—hardness is the dominant impression it makes upon us. Resolution, endurance, must be needed, at any rate, in the dancer's life. Of all arts, it surely is the most exacting; and Marie, who began the study of it at eight years old, had in her father a terribly exacting master. Philip Taglioni was at the head of his profession: he had ideas, revolutionary ideas, about the *costume de ballet*. "Away with paniers, fripperies, powder *à la maréchale*!" cried he—and away accordingly they went. He composed ballets as well as he danced them. Marie, in a word,

grew up in an atmosphere of *entre-châts, jetés-battus*—which mean, in the language of the ballet, "I am madly in love with you!"

She was "madly in love" with *it*, and indeed we cannot discover that she was ever very much in love with anyone or anything else—except, perhaps, money. But if she was rapacious (and some of her managers said she was), she was genuinely ambitious too. Beginning study at eight, as we have said, she threw herself into her art with all her young energy and resolution. Her father could not be too exacting for Marie; she wanted to be a *danseuse hors ligne*—"she would rather have been a milliner than a second-rate dancer." She made her *début* at Vienna on June 10th, 1822, when, if the birth-date 1809 be correct, she would have been only thirteen. It seems hardly possible that a girl should be a finished dancer at that age; and very decidedly, at any rate, Henri Blanchard's gallant hint of "*même un peu plus tard*" becomes incredible. Her father had written the ballet: *Réception d'une jeune nymphe à la cour de Terpsichore.* His universal cleverness stopped short, we perceive, at titles, for nothing could be worse than this; but the ballet thus disfigured was an excellent one, admirably designed for its purpose—the display of a *débutante.* The "nymph" had to pass certain tests before she could win admission from Terpsichore. Marie's success was dazzling, she passed them all—or rather, she did not pass any of them; for so excited was she, that she forgot all the rehearsed effects and actually had to improvise her first steps in public. "Inspiration! only genius could have produced such surprises"—and she was eight times recalled. This forgetfulness —or, in later years, rejection—of the prepared steps was frequent with her. Brilliant things she would do at rehearsal; then, entering, "in a state of intellectual exaltation," would fling every one of them aside. "What I have rehearsed is ordinary: I must do better than *that*!" And better than that she apparently always did, for "her inventions were exquisite."

After Vienna, Munich; and after Munich, Paris—by special favour of Munich, who "lent" her for a month to the Académie Royale de Musique. There, on July 23, 1827, she appeared in *Le Sicilien.* Every other dancer, living or dead, was at once effaced! There was only one dancer in the world now: there

TAGLIONI

LA SYLPHIDE

From an Old Print

never had been one before. Paris went crazy, as Paris then alone knew how. "Fanaticism": so Henri Blanchard called it. "Her *début* at Paris marks the fourth epoch of our theatrical dancing," writes a student of the Ballet; and indeed she was much imitated. To *taglioniser* became a recognised phrase: it meant a reproduction—attempted or achieved—of her ineffable, airy elegance.

After her triumph, she disappeared "like a shadow," back to Munich, but came again next year, presenting *Les Bayadères*. Returning in 1829, she danced as *Psyché* in Gardel's ballet, then performed for the nine-hundred-and-fifth time! Her *Psyché* was a master-piece, and the Académie, resolved to beat Munich this time, engaged her for fifteen years.

All sorts of delicious things happened then in the ballet. There was a Duet with Mlle. Montessu (in *Guillaume Tell*) when the orchestra ceased, and they danced to a Tyrolienne sung by the chorus; there was Taglioni's famous *tour de force* of dancing with clasped hands; there was that enchanting tableau with the rose-coloured scarves in *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, when all the pretty shimmering things were brought into a shell-shaped tribute before her feet, to figure Venus rising from the sea. . . . Nor was that all. Taglioni and Mlle. Noblet danced a *pas de deux* "which recalled the duets between Sontag and Malibran." . . . Here is enthusiasm indeed. Sontag and Malibran—it seems a trifle strong; but no! A writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* gravely reproves us. "When a dancer like Taglioni appears, she gives to the boards of the theatre the same odour of sanctity as reigns in the studio of a great artist." Oh, there was no reserve about Paris! Lovely phrases filled the air: "Like a ray of sunlight in winter," "like a drop of dew in the desert"—like anything aërial, in short, that happened to come into their heads.

The word which came oftenest, which positively, as Henri Blanchard said, "got on our nerves", was Sylph. Her dancing in the ballet of *La Sylphide* was "beyond description—lighter, more vaporous than ever, if possible." "I can never believe," said one writer, "when I see her in *La Sylphide* that Taglioni is a woman—a woman like Mlle. Noblet, for example. Even if she lost her marvellous faculty of leaping into the air every instant . . .

her very walk would prove her superiority. Taglioni moves like a gazelle." Her name is for ever associated with this, "the prettiest of ballets," says Thackeray, in *Pendennis*, "now faded into the past with that most gracious and beautiful of all dancers. Will the young folks ever see anything so charming, anything so classic, anything like Taglioni?"

The young folks, one fears, did not, and do not. Even to our darling Adeline Genée, we cannot feel that the Taglioni phrases belong. "Taglioni was of the elements"; "she needed, as it were, *superterrestrial* parts." The Sylph was supposed to be invisible. You could believe that she was, with your eyes glued upon her. Something more than we have seen in the ballet is implied in such art—or such a physical aptitude—as that. And looking through the folio published in London in 1831, containing six sketches of her by A. E. Chalon, R.A., drawn from life "in the characters in which she has appeared during the present season", we can catch, even now, the peculiar airiness, the "superterrestrial" effect, she produced. The little, clear drawings present a figure which scarcely seems to touch the earth. There are accompanying verses, with the inevitable dew-drops-comparison:

> "They sink to slumber with a sound
> Like thy own footfall on the ground
> So faintly soft—so lightly dear
> It flings no echo on the ear."

Flings disconcerts us: the word is too suggestive of effort to stand near the gossamer creature; but Mr. F. W. R. Bayley, our poet, redeems himself by quite a charming, childlike conceit when he cries:

> "Thou art so like happiness,
> We can hardly love thee less!" . . .

Perhaps her costume helped the illusion a good deal. Dearly as we prize the "microscopic tulle petticoat" (which Taglioni held in horror, deeming it offensive to the human form), we must confess that, despite Degas and his filmy ladies, it *does* destroy the aërial sense. Muscular a dancer cannot but be, and the tulle petticoat makes no secret of it. Taglioni's narrow, long draperies

did. Unimaginably slender she contrived to look, without looking thin at all. The tiny, closely-dressed head was another aid; no "running over with curls," no enlargement. Close to the line of the head lay the glossy dark hair, for in her professional coiffure there were none of the eccentricities shown in her portrait (alluded to above), as a private person. The small determined face was sweeter so: in one of the drawings, Taglioni is almost pretty. . . . But one divines that, watching her movements, you never remembered her face.

Her modesty of costume was a source of distress to various "august personages." Why the adjective? one asks one's-self, for this aspect of Sovereigns has little of the august. It seems to have been only to Sovereigns, oddly enough, that it *was* distressing—or perhaps it is only their anguish which has been thought worthy of record. One of them "in Austria," asked her if she could not contrive to wear shorter petticoats. She asked him if he was married. "*Non, Madame.*" "If you were, should you like to see your wife and daughters in short petticoats?" "*Et pourquoi non?*" said he. But he was not to get off with that. "You will permit me not to believe in the sincerity of that reply." . . . No doubt the august personage thought her as disappointing as her petticoats.

The Emperor Nicholas, again, when she danced at St. Petersburg, simply refused to believe that "you couldn't see her knee." He came down from his box into the stalls to reconnoitre—to see whether *he* could. But even an Imperial Vision failed. On this occasion, however, Taglioni was "much amused."

She set the fashion, despite august disappointments: other dancers adopted her modest garments. So great was Taglioni now, indeed, that she set the other fashion as well. A Leghorn hat, sent with brim turned back lest it should be crushed in the bandbox, did not strike her as having anything singular about it: she wore it so at the Opera. Next day the milliner came, gasping. "Madame Taglioni, what have you done! I sent the brim turned back for fear of crushing. . . . My reputation is ruined. *You have worn it like that!*" "I thought it was a new fashion," said the culprit, blushing—and so it was, the next week. That represents the fine flower of many a feminine ambition:

to set the fashion. Perhaps she counted it among her other triumphs—the showers of bouquets (she danced one ballet amid a rain of flowers!), the horses taken out of her carriage, the twenty-five recalls one night at Vienna, the still more striking experience of being obliged to dance her Gitana dance twice over on the night she produced it in Paris. The day after this glory, the theatre was closed: "they were repairing the auditorium!" . . . Auber wrote the music for *La Gitana*: Auber who "doted on the ballet, as the ballet doted on him."

Taglioni's only rival was Fanny Elssler. This Gitana dance was a blow levelled directly at her. Elssler's great triumph had been in *La Cachucha*; but "Taglioni's dance," said a malicious French paper, "*is* La Cachucha, transported into the region of poetry." In this way the journalists fomented the duel. "She has taken your Cachucha, Elssler—your one poor triumph! All you can do now is to take her Sylphide." Elssler, a handsome big girl, was inconceivable as a Sylph. Her province was assuredly not the superterrestrial. She had made her fame chiefly by a much-talked-of "movement of the hips", and by *des œillades agaçantes*. "Taglioni makes no *œillades*" (so the journalists broke out again in a frenzy of egging them on), "she intoxicates by force of talent alone." In *La Gitana*, she was more daring than ever before—so poor Elssler had had some influence!—"but always with reticence, with taste." . . . Elssler retired to New York, where, one is rather glad to find, she was adored, as the Sylph was in Paris and Vienna—and Bordeaux. For Bordeaux, at that time, was *the* arbiter for dancers. "Dancing was almost a religious work there." Bordeaux was satisfied—so all was well.

Her London *début* was in 1828, at the King's Theatre. Lablache and Malibran were singing at the Opera that night. Again, in 1835, she appeared after *Lucrezia Borgia*—the night of Mario's *début*, the night when Grisi, as Lucrezia, "put on the malign and fascinating beauty of a sorceress." She danced once in the same piece with Grisi! (1835.) It was *La prova d'un' Opera seria*, a comic piece where Grisi had to pretend to sing badly. She sang—oh, so divinely badly! Lablache acted incomparably; Taglioni, representing the *corps de ballet*, was

"more like thistledown than ever." . . . 'Tis like the Arabian Nights: we do not quite believe in it. People cannot have had such evenings at the Opera. It was all written to make posterity unhappy and discontented. Even the children are supposed to have seen these wonders.

"Taglioni cannot fly, Papa: only birds can fly," says one precocious.

"Come and see for yourself," says Papa. And the lucky little wretch is taken to the Opera.

"Well?"

"Yes—I must confess, Taglioni *does* fly a little." She used to dream that she could fly, at any rate—for half-a-second, "would have the sensation of hanging in the air" . . . then, would wake up, unhappy: it wasn't true! So now we know the Dreams of a Sylph.

They were so nearly realised that we almost forget, as her adorers did, that Taglioni was a woman. "The difficulty, with her, seems to be to stay on the ground at all." She came to the ground, at any rate—and badly, when she married, in 1832, Count Gilbert des Voisins, the only man with whom her name is connected. He had been her lover; but the whole affair is puzzling, for he left her almost on the morrow of their marriage. Albert Vandam, in his *Englishman in Paris*, expresses himself somewhat brutally on this enigmatic union. "Count des Voisins wronged her cruelly. He conceived himself bound to make reparation for error—but what possessed him to commit the error!" For Vandam met her in 1844, and was not attracted. He had seen her dance in 1840, and had been disappointed; now in 1844, it was still worse. She *had* deteriorated in her art. Alfred de Musset gracefully put public opinion into an epigram:—

> "Ne courez pas après votre ombre,
> Et tâchez de nous la laisser." . . .

But Vandam's disappointment with her as a dancer was nothing to his disappointment with her as a woman. "She was

very unamiable," he curtly says—and yet Vandam had a better reception than most men had. Taglioni hated all males of Latin race; to Russians, English, Viennese, she would thaw a little, to Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen above all, she was a sharply-pointed icicle. One knows not why: perhaps des Voisins was responsible. He was plainly an unpleasant person. Arsène Houssaye tells of a dinner at the Duc de Morny's where Taglioni and des Voisins met, twenty years after their marriage. The Count arrived late: they were already at table. Taglioni, who knew all European languages, was perhaps obtrusively displaying her accomplishment. Whatever she was doing, it led des Voisins to inquire of his neighbour, "Who is that she-professor on Morny's right?" "But that is your wife," replied the other, too astonished to be tactful. Des Voisins considered her—finally remarked, "After all, it is quite possible!" Taglioni had recognised him more quickly, and had reproved Morny for asking her to dine in such bad company. The climax came when, after dinner, des Voisins asked to be introduced. She was quite equal to the impertinence. "I think, Monsieur, that I had the honour of being presented to you in 1832"—the year of their marriage!—and with that, turned her back. . . . Morny's dinners must often have had their bad quarters-of-an-hour, one gathers—he seems to have been rather too adventurous a host.

She had one daughter and one son. The daughter became the Princesse Mathilde Troubetzkoy; the son joined the French Army, but afterwards returned to civil life and married a rich Englishwoman. By 1844, the great career was plainly drawing to an end; but we still hear of her in London. In 1845, she danced in the famous *Pas de Quatre* with Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Grahn; in 1847, came the Jenny Lind fever. Taglioni retired from the Opera "rather than brook a rival"—the phrase gives one an odd impression of Jenny Lind!—saying "*La danse est comme la Turquie, bien malade.*" Her terms had been enormous. Alfred Bunn, in 1836, engaged her to appear "alternately with Malibran"—each taking three nights a week. He paid her £100 a night for herself; £600 to her father as ballet-master during her visit; £900 to her brother and sister-in-law to dance with her, besides two benefits guaranteed for

£1000, and half-a-benefit guaranteed for £200 for the brother—£6000 in all. It seemed, despite the expense, a promising speculation for Bunn; he returned to London—having arranged all this in Paris—well-satisfied. Unfortunate man! Within a few days, he heard of the death of Malibran! (September 23, 1836.)

After her retirement, Taglioni went at first to Italy, spending her leisure "between her villa on the Lake of Como and her palace at Venice." Those words bring back the magic which, as a dancer, played through her life. As a woman, Taglioni fails entirely; nothing attracts, nothing touches, us. The more we know, the less we like. . . . But regard her merely as dancer, and her life shimmers for us like the rose-coloured scarves in the ballet where she figured Venus rising from the sea. She had an adventure even—a real, real adventure, with a picturesque Russian highwayman . . . oh, dream of all youth come true! And his name was Trischka. He was the terror of the neighbourhood; she was advised to take precautions. She took none, and her carriage was stopped on the snowy road. "Madame, I ask only for a dance." "On this road?" "You have rugs, cloths, in your carriage." They were spread upon the rough, snow-furrowed road; the moon and Trischka were the audience—and Taglioni danced for a quarter-of-an-hour. Trischka fell under the spell: "No money, no jewels—only the rugs! I shall never part with them." And gathering them reverentially over his arm, he mounted, waved his hat, and watched them drive away into the distance—the very Brigand of Romance!

Let us forget that she spent her last days in London as a "teacher of deportment," poor and old: a white-haired woman, "escorting a bevy of schoolgirls in Hyde Park, or teaching court-curtseys to the proud daughters of the gentry." Let us forget that she died at Marseilles in 1884, "very old and very poor." . . . What shall we remember? Shall we remember Emma Livry (of whom Gautier wrote), that exquisite virginal creature, who created but one part in a ballet—*Le Papillon*, composed and arranged by Taglioni—and that part, the Butterfly herself. "She could actually imitate the fantastic and exquisite motion"—and like the butterfly, she lived but a day. At twenty-one, Emma

Livry died, after long suffering, in the Paris which had taken her to its capricious heart. "Paris extraordinarily loved her"—and so half Paris saw the strange and beautiful incident at her funeral, of two white butterflies which hovered over her coffin all the way. Taglioni was at that funeral, weeping. For Emma Livry, she felt what perhaps she had never felt before—a human love. Let us remember her so: a woman, yes! but still more, even then, a dancer. The Ballet was the great passion of her life: Emma Livry was her daughter in it. . . . It was more real to her than the other motherhood. "Taglioni was not a woman," so they said of her: "she was a magic spell."

JENNY LIND

1820–1887

SHALL we confess that Jenny Lind does not attract us? It is a serious thing to confess—a betrayal of our own worldliness, triviality, vulgarity, all sorts of "'nesses" and "'ties." The merit of truthfulness is the only merit we have left. . . . If we could but find a memoir of her in which she was allowed to reveal herself, to show us her humanity, all might yet be well—but it were to ask for the moon. The flood of sentiment which she let loose—in the German and Scandinavian countries, especially—is beyond belief, though we are forced to believe: almost beyond endurance, though we are forced to endure. One of the great singers of the world, and, beyond question, one of its noble women, she might well have been suffered to speak for herself, as it were; to show her faults (we hope she had some), to bend under her weaknesses, descending to our common level of humanity. . . . But no! Panegyric, panegyric—hysterical ravings about her heroism because she undertook the life for which she was plainly born, and which in the beginning, at any rate, she ardently desired; still more hysterical ravings because she gave it up; transcendental eulogy of her "modesty," her "diffidence," her "sacrifices to Art"; utterly unmeasured praise of her singing and her acting, fine as both must certainly have been . . . all this we must wade through, if we desire to know of Jenny Lind—and at the end, instead of helping, us, it baffles us.

The outstanding fact of her life—the fact which makes her unique in musical history—is her abandonment of the Opera at the height of a dizzying fame. This striking manifestation of character has received its full meed of praise: praise, indeed

is a feeble term for the sort of thing which is poured out in such pages as Canon Scott Holland's, for example—and praise, so far as we can see, is not called for at all. Nothing is here for praise or blame. She simply followed her own impulse—which had altered with the years; for in her early life, she spoke and wrote enthusiastically of the career of a Queen of Opera. The individual opinion of her clerical biographer tends to exalt her act into a deed of heroic sacrifice; but it is no sacrifice to abandon what has ceased to make us happy. Strange, indeed, it may well appear that such glory and such affection as went with the glory, should fail to bring felicity to any ardent heart. They did so fail, however—and therefore, how is Jenny Lind a saint, a heroine, a martyr? Only if they had *not* failed, could those titles be hers.

Unregenerate that we are, we feel that in this unresponsiveness to the special joy lies the secret of her want of magnetism for us. Troubles, many and difficult to bear, and petty and horrible intrigues, and fatigues, and a certain isolation, belong to the career of an opera-singer, in an exaggerated degree, no doubt. But to what great public career do they not belong? and we honour those who carry the flag to the end of the battle. "One crowded hour" . . . the old lines still kindle the heart!

It will be said that Jenny Lind did not resign the crowded hours: that her most successful period was perhaps the American Concert-tours under Barnum's management and her own—especially under her own, for she amassed over three millions in less than a year! The argument leaves us unmoved. By several degrees less, then, is she a heroine and a saint, we answer. Never was advertisement more clamant, never had Barnum a bigger boom ("it almost beat Tom Thumb!" he said sadly, after she had thrown him over), never did even America feast its eyes on such gigantic letters as those in which JENNY LIND was painted on her travelling-piano. . . . Let us unsaint her, good-naturedly: very human was our Jenny!

Her nature was essentially a simple, a domestic one, and a deeply religious one besides. "She regarded her great gift as a gift from God." But in that she was not unique, though one would suppose that she was, to read Canon Scott Holland's

Memoir. Catalani had felt the same, in the same way: "I do like to sing to my God!" she exclaimed after an oratorio, and she never went on the stage without a preliminary prayer. Others, expressing the feeling differently, gloried in the good they could do, and did as much as Jenny Lind. Malibran's generosity—the most unostentatious of all—was endless, but Malibran, with her odd, warm, personal nature, gave nearly always to private people; Persiani was known as *la dame de charité*; Catalani, again, did exquisite deeds of public and private charity; Grisi too, and Rubini, and Déjazet. . . . Generosity may indeed be called the foible of singers! And the best feeling we have about Jenny Lind is that she would have been the first to acknowledge and rejoice in all this. Instead of desiring the wild eulogy of her biographers, she would, we think, have resented it.

Now and again, through the welter of sentiment, we catch a glimpse of the real woman. Not an "interesting" woman, but a very naïve and natural one. It is chiefly—indeed *only*—in her nervous, by turns abnormally diffident and abnormally self-confident, letters that we find herself: as, for instance, that written during her pupilage in Paris, where she compares herself favourably as an actress with Rachel—and then hastens to add that she would never dream of doing such a thing: "Poor me!" Now there we get a flash-light on Jenny Lind. Outwardly diffident and sincerely diffident, she no doubt was; but psychologists know well how closely diffidence is related to vanity—if it is not, indeed, its very outcome. "Nobody acts as I act"—and the truth was that apart from her fresh impulsive personality, Jenny Lind, so far from being a dramatic artist whom "nobody acted like," was, according to many critics, markedly conventional in her acting.

Thus directly we take her own unvarnished word for it, we begin to find her refreshingly human! Again. In 1838 it was that her Great Hour dawned. On March 7th of that year, she appeared in the part of Agatha in *Der Freischütz* at Stockholm. "I got up that morning one creature," she used to say; "I went to bed another one!" . . . "And, all through her life," writes Canon Scott Holland with his prodigality of sentiment, "she kept

the 7th of March with a religious solemnity; she would ask to have herself remembered on it with prayers; she treated it as a second birthday." Well! In 1842, we find her, quaintly writing home from Paris: "You know, to-day four years ago, I made my *début* in *Der Freischütz*,—no! five years ago, I mean! No! it is four, I think. . . . Well, yes! I do not know! Anyhow, it was the 7th of March."

How natural and amusing that is, how much more endearing than the "solemn celebration"—yet on that bright, girlish letter, Canon Scott Holland has to intone a panegyric. In all her letters, we find the same ingenuous note. They bristle with exclamation-points, like that one; they abound in "Ah!" and "Oh!" and "Well, yes," and occasionally comes an irrelevant "God help"—somebody! "She is a nice kind girl, God help her"—for instance. . . . The peasant-girl, the country-girl, sounds in that homely exclamation—even as we hear in Ireland the "God bless him" tagged to any praise—and Jenny Lind preserved all her life the fresh savour of the country. "She always looked as if she had come from the country"—an incongruous aspect for a great opera-singer; but no doubt it was more a question of atmosphere than of aspect, just as primroses in London bring the woods into our hearts. . . . Already, reading only her letters, covering the rest of the sugary pages with our hand, we begin to like her better!

Born at Stockholm, in 1820, Jenny Lind was an infant prodigy. At three, her grandmother found her picking out the music of a military fanfare upon the piano—she, who was to triumph in the *Daughter of the Regiment*! "Mark the predestination"; and the old lady marked it, for she made the speech which the grandmothers of famous folk seem born to make: "*Remember my words*, etcetera." Thus from the earliest moment of her conscious life, Jenny Lind never wanted for recognition. At nine, she used to sit in the window and sing to her cat, "with its blue ribbon round its neck"; and Mlle. Lundberg, a dancer at the Royal Theatre, was told by her maid of the wondrous voice. "I never heard such beautiful singing." Lundberg was interested, she

had Jenny brought to her—and at once declared that she had genius and must be educated for the stage. She arranged that Croelius, the Singing-Master at the Royal Theatre, should hear her. Croelius heard her, and wept. He took her to Count Puke, the Intendant of the Theatre. "How old is she?" demanded the Count. "Nine," said Croelius. "But this is not a *crèche*! It is His Majesty's Theatre!" Puke was however prevailed upon to hear the "small, ugly, broad-nosed, shy girl" (as she described herself at that time in later years)—and Puke also was "moved to tears." Well, well! Tears were wonderfully easily come by in those days, it would seem; but something more practical was come by also, and this was Jenny's adoption by the Royal Theatre, to be taught to sing and be educated and brought up in the School of Pupils attached to it. . . . *Theater-elev*: that was what she was. She had food, clothes, and lodging at the Theatre's expense, and was taught singing, elocution, and dancing, besides the ordinary things: "French, religion, the piano." . . . The dancing served her well in later years, for she moved exquisitely, and her posture before and while she sang was one of her noted graces.

Funny little girl! At ten, an infant prodigy of *acting*, not of singing; at fourteen, a revolting daughter—which, indeed, she remained all her life. At fourteen, she ran away from home (for the Theatre had boarded her with her parents) and took refuge in the Opera-House itself! Some upper rooms there were always occupied by the pupils, so the Directors acquiesced; but Fru Lind insisted on her maternal and her business-rights: there was a contract and the contract must be kept! Jenny was sent back in 1836. But later on, she ran away again, and this time did not return. . . . In 1838, as we have seen, her Hour came, with her *début* at the Theatre as Agatha, in *Der Freischütz*. The day was one horror. She suffered all her life from overwhelming nervousness; in one of her later letters, when she was an established diva, we read, "This terrible nervousness destroys everything for me." But fortunately, with the actual moment, the obsession would leave her. It was during the day that she was beset, that she would weep, tremble, agonisedly practise, *à demi-voix*, her chosen effects. . . . The success, on that famous Seventh of March, was beyond all question: "she had found her power." Agatha was

always one of her great parts; the *scena* known in England as "Softly Sighs" displayed the wonderful soprano to full advantage. "It seemed to float upwards like a cloud of incense," said a Berlin critic when she sang Agatha there in 1845. But between the *début* at Stockholm in 1838, and the Berlin glories of five and six years later, there lay a tract of desolate difficult country. She had Sweden at her feet; but Sweden has never awarded the crowns in Art: "Stockholm was not, and never had been, a centre of artistic progress, even of the second order." Every honour that Sweden—"my beloved Sweden!"—could shower had been showered on her: Academic and Court appointments, presentations, processions, serenades, plenty of the never-failing "tears"; and yet, clinging and ever-homesick patriot though she was, Jenny Lind was not satisfied. Her ambition as an artist felt its own broken wings. She could not reach to her ideal; she did not know how. Excellent workaday teaching she had had, from Croelius and from Berg, but the liberator of her voice had not yet appeared. The voice had notable faults; its middle notes were thin and veiled, and her breathing was badly managed. There were many things that she could not do at all; some that she did "provincially." Perhaps it was the advent of a famous baritone of the Italian School, Belletti—then singing with her at the Royal Theatre—which opened her eyes; for "he showed her, vividly, what singing in the great Italian manner really meant"; and when she asked where she too might learn to sing like that, he answered, as he could not but answer: "At Paris, under Garcia!"

And so to Paris, in 1841 (raising the funds by a tour of provincial concert-singing), she went. All the world knows the story of Garcia's reception. How she sang, and broke down, and how he pityingly murmured, "Mademoiselle, *you have no voice left.*" . . . She told Mendelssohn in after-years that the anguish of that moment exceeded all that she had ever suffered in her whole life. But she showed great courage. She lifted her bowed head, and asked "What am I to do?" Garcia, still pitiful—this was Malibran's brother, Manuel Garcia, not of course the terrible brutal father—said that if she would consent not to sing, and scarcely to speak, for six weeks, she might come to him again at

JENNY LIND

From an Old Print

the end of that time. "I will see whether anything can be done for you."

Well, London in 1847 knew what had been done! . . . This was the method of Garcia, as described in a letter from herself: "I have already had five lessons. I have to begin again from the beginning; to sing scales, up and down, slowly and with great care; to practise the shake—awfully slowly; and to try to get rid of the hoarseness, if possible. Moreover he is very particular about the breathing." And then, on the historic Seventh of March, in 1842: "*Garcia is satisfied with me.*"

All our admiration goes out to her in this episode. Here are pluck, endurance, modesty indeed—and to add the spice, the smile, here is too the apparently incongruous conceit, for do but read: "My ideal was and is so high that I could find no mortal who could in the least degree satisfy my demands. Therefore I sing after no one's method—only, as far as I am able, after that of the birds; for their Master was the only one who came up to my demands for truth, clearness, and expression." A sense of humour our Jenny plainly did not possess! Her type forbade it. She was the "Vierge du Nord," the "Prêtresse de Diane"; she was conscientious, strenuous, serious—all the words ending in "'ous." Look at the earnest countenance in the picture by Magnus, painted when she was twenty-six. The deep-set clear frank eyes have no secrets from us; the large firm mouth has little mobility—smiles did not play round eyes or mouth too easily, the sparkle of wit, of humour, seldom puzzled listener or beholder. A stubborn little face it is, though: such a "rocky", characteristic nose! The nose was clearly that of one who would have her way, and, let clergymen ensaint her as a martyr if they will, the fact remains that Jenny Lind did pretty well what she liked all her life through. She liked strenuous things at one time—and did them, liked less strenuous things at another—and did them too. . . . Further, the pose of the arms and hands is full of significance. The attitude of the picture was characteristic, we are told—and we believe it. There again is will; and there, too, is a queer kind of promise of "conscientiousness,"

a lack of flexibility, of movement, of diversity. A little heavily they lie, do they not? a little . . . Teutonically? There exists a picture of Malibran, leaning her head on one weary arm—the other flung into her lap. . . . All the infinite universe of difference between the two women is written there: the excellence of the one, the exquisiteness of the other! "*Cœur d'ange et de lion!*" . . . Such wildfire phrases never sounded for Jenny Lind: the phrases she inspired were "pretty"—they charmed, they did not kindle, the imagination.

But then the wildfire Latins never heard her. Strange! that definite limitation of her glory to Northern Europe. Plainly all magnetism between her and the Latin races was wanting. In Paris she never sang, never would sing—was she afraid? She was always "afraid," as we know, wherever she sang; but at least the great Northern capitals were regarded merely as alarming friends—not as bogies! More singular still, though, is the fact that Garcia, having done all he had done, was never enthusiastic about her. Always he preferred a fellow-pupil, Henrietta Nissen (afterwards Mme. Siegfried Salomon), who assuredly never made a tithe of the sensation which Jenny Lind made. There must have been something more than want of magnetism—there must have been some positive antagonism between her and the French, Italians, Spaniards. We hear of no adoration from any member of any of these races, and, though she never sang in their countries, many such must have heard and met her in the countries where she did sing. Nor was this a mere question of nationality—for think of Schrœder-Devrient! The odd fact remains, and impoverishes her history; for as Paris is the queen of taste, so are Frenchmen the kings of biography. A memoir, even a slight study, of Jenny Lind by a Frenchman would not have left us where we are to-day: surfeited, yet utterly unsatisfied, questioners!

When the pupilage was over, we find her writing: "I am longing for home; *I am longing for my theatre.* Oh, to pour out my feelings in a beautiful part! Until I stand there again, I shall not know myself as I really am. This has been my joy,

my pride, my glory!" And now how much more, for the voice was liberated! No need to describe it—we have all known of that marvellous soprano from our cradles. Almost we seem to have heard it, ringing in "Softly Sighs," trilling in "Ah, non giunge!" (her Amina in *La Sonnambula* was her greatest part) soaring in the *Elijah* music on the wonderful F sharp, that most poignant, exquisite, of treble notes, and in her voice so supremely lovely that Mendelssohn had it in his longing ears when he wrote the brilliant opening phrases in "Hear ye, Israel." . . . Or again, in her own Swedish songs—"veritable snow-flowers," "immaculate purity of crystal sounds!"

All was ready in 1842, and of the great cities Berlin heard her first, in 1844. It was Meyerbeer who brought her there. He had heard of her in Paris, and asked the Director of the Académie Royale de Musique to let him hear, at a private performance on its stage, "a young person" of whom he had had a very good account. "It is not for you," he added to the Director; "the voice is described as pretty, but too weak for the Grand Opera. I want to see whether I can make use of it for Berlin." Léon Pillet gave all facilities, and to a little party of six or eight persons on Saturday, July 23, 1842, Jenny Lind sang for the first and last time in the great French House. "On the next day," wrote Pillet, "I asked Meyerbeer what he had thought of the singer. He had said—I was told—that she was not without talent, but had still much to accomplish . . . and, in fact, he thought so little of her for the Opera that he did not even speak to me about her." . . . Her friend, Herr Lindblad, said that Jenny had not sung nearly so well as she could. What Meyerbeer said to Lindblad was that hers was a "chaste pure voice, full of grace and virginality." Somehow, one feels that Meyerbeer might have said more, that he had felt some disappointment? Is it too bold to say that we think there was disappointment all round—that if Meyerbeer *had* said more. . . . It was unofficial—true! There were no lights and only a pianoforte accompaniment; and yet, and yet—! Unofficial "trials" had issued differently, before then. It was not a *début*, so it was not a failure; but it might have been a *début*, and it might have been a triumph.

Such, at any rate, is our impression.

After unequalled glories in Berlin, at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig (with Mendelssohn as conductor) and in Vienna—where her diffidence almost seemed like frenzy, for once arrived, she was seized with terror and refused to appear, until soundly rated by Mendelssohn's friend, Herr Hauser!—came London, in 1847. London and the Jenny Lind-fever! With what words can we describe it? The great German capitals had been ravished, but they had not gone stark staring mad. That was left for London, and London accomplished it with a will. The crowds at the doors, the frightful crushing (Canon Scott Holland remembers having been thrown down by the first rush, on the night of her *début*, and lying for a second, until rescued by a "friendly giant", in imminent danger of being trampled to death), the enormously raised prices, the bursting houses, the flowers, tears, cheers, "hurricanes of applause," the Queen's presentation-bouquet lying at her feet, the Royal Family attending every time she sang . . . all these were the mere sanities of the fever. The delirium was egregious. Gloves *à la* Lind, handkerchiefs *à la* Lind, everything *à la* Lind; women dressing *à la Suèdoise*, girls singing the "Jenny" romance or dancing the "Lind" Polka, young men spending their whole allowance on stalls; portraits of her on snuff-boxes, match-boxes, bonbon-boxes, tea-trays; horses, cats, dogs, canaries, named after her; broadsides of execrable verse selling in the streets:—

"Oh, is there not a pretty fuss
In London all around
About the Swedish Nightingale
The talk of all the town?
Each Square and Street as through you pass,
Aloud with praises ring
About this pretty singing-bird
The famous Jenny Lind." . . .

. . . What fun it must have been—for those who heard her! But three unlucky Liverpool gentlemen came up to London to hear her, stayed a week, and never succeeded in getting into Her Majesty's Theatre. Two thousand pounds a night were the receipts during her second London season; crowds would wait outside to see her get into her carriage, and the places nearest

the door were bought for "several shillings!" Oh, London knew how to go mad.

Her *début* was in *Robert le Diable*, as Alice, but the greatest triumph was her Amina in *La Sonnambula*; her Maria, in the *Fille du Régiment*, was also exultantly successful. Her Norma was a failure: there she could not win against Grisi. In *Le Nozze di Figaro* she was exquisite. Her shake, her *portamento*, her *mezza-di-voce*, her *pianissimo* effects—all these set the critics quivering with joy. The columns of the newspapers panted and thrilled, like the Great Heart of the British Public: it was that rare combination of blazing popularity and genuine artistic perfection which perhaps only singers, among artists, ever achieve. . . .

And then, in May, 1849, the Last Appearance in Opera!

She chose *Robert le Diable* for her farewell, which was to be in London. "So continuous were the plaudits that they blended with each other into one roll of heavy sound. The audience universally rose when she appeared. At the last call, she seemed particularly moved." . . . "Did she feel sad?" Canon Scott Holland asks, and answers himself, "She never spoke of such a sadness in after life." He continues, with the irritating exultation which marks his comments on her attitude towards her adoring public: "That the last round of applause, the last wild shout from pit and stalls and gallery, was absolutely nothing to her, we know well enough. . . . She was too well accustomed to it." Is it possible that he does not see how such narrow nonsense depreciates the woman of whom he writes! Jenny Lind had a warm heart, if she had a cold nature. "Too well accustomed to it" is no mood in which to receive such love, such admiration as that; if she had such a thought, she is by so much the less lovable—indeed, she is not lovable at all.

Her career as a concert- and oratorio-singer was no less triumphant than her stage-career had been. The enormous sums she amassed were used for charitable purposes: in a few months in England, she raised the sum of £10,500! We have seen what she gained in America. But, for our part, we feel that

the climax of her life was on the summer-night in 1849, when in that delightful form of art, the Lyric Drama, she took her farewell of the stage, and the great house rocked with love and joy and grief!

Oratorios and charities and Bishops who did not know one note of music from another, and Bishops' wives who wrote, "Her manner to the Bishop is so reverential . . . the singing is the least part of the charm"; and further (to Canon Scott Holland's tearful delight) "I would rather hear Jenny talk than sing" . . . these, outlaws that we are, bring but a twinkle of the eye at the best, a sense of intolerable snobbishness at the worst. "One very remarkable thing is . . . that she treats her superiors as we treat Royalty: never originates anything, never speaks first, never comes to sit down *by you.*" (*sic*) . . . . It is no less impressive than enlightening to the lay-mind to realise that this is the report of a hostess upon her guest; for the imperishable passage is taken from one of Mrs. Stanley's (Bishop's Wife to the Bishop of Norwich) letters during Jenny Lind's visit in 1849, immediately before she left the stage. Was it for such delights that she disdained the Opera? The visit must, it is true, have been unforgettable—a glory to which it were wise (lest it also should pall) not to get too well-accustomed.

But let us leave it—let us escape from the Bishops' wives. . . . What shall we take from her last? Another of her attractive letters? that written immediately after the *débût* in London (in 1847) to friends in "my Vienna":—"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu*! how splendidly everything has gone with me. . . . Yesterday, I made my first appearance—and it went *so*, that all through the night I could not sleep for joy!" Is not that good—better than the reverential manner and the knowing her place?

And then, to finish, to show how long the memory of her wildwood-charm could last, and how strangely, how unexpectedly it could penetrate, hear this little story, vouched for by a living eye-witness.

"On a November morning in 1887, a cosmopolitan Jew, once well known in London, a hardened old worldling, but a 'man of sentiment' and a passionate lover of all the arts, was sitting up in bed in his house at Buyukdéré on the Bosphorus, reading *The*

Times. At a table near the window, scrutinising the morning's mail, stood his young secretary. Hearing what sounded like a sob, the latter glanced round suddenly. The old Jew's eyes were closed—large tears were coursing down his cheeks. . . . *The Times* had fallen from his trembling fingers; the secretary saw, standing out in leaded type from the page, words, to him insignificant enough: "DEATH OF JENNY LIND." . . . But they had set the nerves a-tingle for the one who knew—with all those years between! *Death of Jenny Lind*—and the old man's tears. This is the Singer's epitaph. Even the Bishops' wives and Barnum could not blot it all out: that lover of all the arts, in 1887, was remembering her "at the Opera."

THE "EGERIA"

TERESA GAMBA GUICCIOLI

1802–1873

" Her love was Byron's best reward,
His laurels twine around her name,
And ever with the English Bard
The Guiccioli will rise to fame."

THESE lines were written, in all seriousness, by the renowned "Speranza" (Lady Wilde) to the author of one of the silliest books it has ever been our lot to read. This is the *Recollections of Two Distinguished Persons*, by Mary R. Darby-Smith—a title which sufficiently forecasts the contents. One of the Distinguished Persons is the Marquise de Boissy—formerly the Countess Guiccioli, who assuredly has risen to fame on no other pretext than her connection with the "English Bard." "His laurels twine around her name"—and it gives one no pleasure whatever to see them there.

"*Tout Byron amoureux*," says the incisive Frenchman, Félix Rabbe, "*se résume en deux mots: besoin impérieux de la femme et mépris de la femme.*" . . . La Guiccioli believed that she had reduced the two words to one, or feigned, in later life, to believe it. We shall see, in reading his account (as given in his lavish, characteristic letters) of their liaison, which "word" dominated their relationship to one another.

She was the daughter of Count Gamba, a nobleman of Ravenna, was born in 1802, and educated in a convent until she was fifteen. At sixteen she was married to Count Guiccioli—very rich, with large estates on the borders of Ancona and Bologna. Teresa was his third wife, and he was older than her

father. She was a pretty, not a beautiful, woman. There was a certain massiveness about her build which makes the caustic Jeaffreson use, in describing her, the impossible epithet "chumpy": her neck, shoulders, arms, and bust, however, were superb. No sylph, in short, but a "very broad-breasted, full-waisted Contessa," with large languishing blue eyes, amazingly long lashes, arched eyebrows, "wickedly pretty teeth," and a mass of magnificent hair—"so absolutely golden that if a guinea-gold fillet of the deepest yellowness ever seen in gold, had been put about her head, the tress and the ornament would have been precisely the same hue and quality of colour."

Six months after her marriage in the autumn of 1818, Byron met Teresa Guiccioli for the first time, at one of the Countess Benzoni's receptions in Venice. Neither had desired the introduction. The lady was tired, and had come to the party only to oblige her husband; Byron hated to make new acquaintances, and yielded merely to please his hostess. But the Guiccioli throws around the incident a glittering veil of romance. "When I entered the room, I saw what seemed to be a beautiful apparition reclining on a sofa. . . . Asked if he would be presented to me, Byron answered: 'No. I cannot know her—she is too beautiful.'"

If Byron really made this particularly foolish answer, it must have been in a spirit of the purest *persiflage*; but it is much more likely that he never, in any tone, said any such thing. He did, it is true, admire Teresa: her buxom type appealed to him. Yet this "plump little countess" (Jeaffreson again!) wrote of him that he was "incapable of loving a woman unless she seemed to him an almost immaterial being." That seems to have been her way of saying that he could never bear to see a woman eat—his well-known ridiculous whim.

In a sense, however, it was love at first sight. Byron "made up his mind to enslave her"; and as he learned from her that she and her husband were leaving Venice in a fortnight, he had not much time to lose. "At parting, Lord Byron wrote something on a scrap of paper and handed it to me." From that evening, they saw one another every day. There were few Platonic beatings about the bush. The husband gave them eleven days

—"it was enough." They were lovers when the Count set out upon his annual spring visit to his Romagnese States, and took his wife with him. Teresa fainted three times on the first day's journey, but managed to write to Byron at every stage. When she arrived at Ravenna, she was "half-dead"—but still she managed to write to Byron.

He, left behind, was not at all unhappy. The "Carnival of Venice" was over; the utterly vicious life which he had led there had ceased some time before he met Teresa Guiccioli. Byron's return to the decencies of life has often been attributed to her influence, but Jeaffreson, in his interesting book, has shown conclusively that this is not the truth. The truth is, very prosaically, that the terrible depravation of this period made him extremely ill, and that when he recovered, he gave it up. There was nothing pernicious that he had not done. His palace on the Grand Canal had been a sort of harem, filled with women of the lowest class. "Less harm would have come to him from these creatures," writes Jeaffreson, "had he possessed the cynical hardness and spiritual grossness to think of them as animals. . . . To call his feeling love would be a profanation; but no less sacred word would adequately describe the fleeting sentiment of perverted sympathy and debasing admiration with which he cherished these miserable wretches." Rabbe, with the Gallic faculty for summing up a complexity in a phrase, calls him "*Ce Don Juan de l'idéal.*" And again: "He had a mania for posing as the dupe of women and the victim of love. . . . The contrast between his ideal of love and the reality was radical and absolute." He was like the man described by Pascal, "*qui voulant faire l'ange, fait la bête.*" Moreover, at this time he was indulging himself in eating and drinking to an extent which he never was able to attempt with impunity. His ordinary starvation-diet was partly the effect of a weak digestion, but more largely his self-chosen method of keeping the slender and interesting proportions which he always lost when he ate largely. At Venice, during this phase, he did eat largely, and he drank tremendously. The result was "maddening torment." It was this punishment which retrieved him from vice, and not, alas! Teresa's influence.

He stayed in Venice for a month after her departure; and

wrote several flippant letters about his "love-affair" to Hoppner,* his closest friend. Flippant is indeed a feeble description of the epistles which Hoppner then received from him; and when he did at last set out (on June 2nd) for Ravenna, he despatched another letter on the way:—"A journey in an Italian June is a conscription, and if I was not the most constant of men, I should now be swimming in the Lido, instead of smoking in the dust of Padua." Perceiving, nevertheless, with the inward eye of solitude, how picturesque was this "conscription", he also wrote on the way a long sentimental poem, the familiar verses to the

> "River, that rollest by the ancient walls,
> Where dwells the lady of my love"—

filled with all the Byronic glamour, the absurd, but then irresistible, Byronic "properties": the murky stream and the murky heart, the burnt-out passions, tears, "meridian blood." . . .

> "'Tis vain to struggle—let me perish young—"

ah, how young he for ever was, for ever, no matter at what age he had died, would have remained!

At last he reached Ravenna. No sooner had he alighted than Count Guiccioli called, and invited him to the Palace. "It will distract the Countess in her illness," he said, with how much of conscious irony we shall never know. Byron went next day, and found her really in a serious condition. He was deeply concerned. He collected medical books and studied them incessantly; in the end, he persuaded the Count to send for Aglietti, the renowned Venetian doctor, who was a friend of his. Aglietti came, and ordered "a continuance of the treatment."

Byron accordingly went on visiting the lady every day.

The treatment was studiously followed for two months, the Count acquiescing. His attitude is enigmatic, for he had been notoriously jealous of his two former wives. Byron explained it in another letter to Hoppner: "The fact appears to be that he is completely *governed* by her—for that matter," he added, in his favourite pose, "so am I." But the extraordinary Italian institution of the *cavaliere servente*, or *cicisbeo*, should not be

* The Britannic Consul-General at Venice.

forgotten in judging Count Guiccioli. Italian ladies were accustomed to this luxury, upon which Byron had later many entertaining comments to make for his correspondents. Teresa herself declared, when her husband did tardily object to the affair: "It is hard that I should be the only woman in Romagna who is not to have her *amico*." . . . The Count, old and well-experienced, probably winked at the *liaison* because he knew that it would go on no matter what he did; and, just as probably, was counting on Byron's notorious fickleness to make it a short affair.

The two months from June to August went by very amusingly. It was a fine opportunity, though, for a display of the famous melancholy, and accordingly in July, we find Byron possessed with the conviction that the Guiccioli is going into consumption. "Her constitution tends that way." (It did nothing of the kind.) "I never even could keep alive a dog, that I liked or that liked me." He dashed off some verses (which are not in his published works)—

> "I heard thy fate without a tear,
> Thy loss with scarce a sigh;
> And yet thou wert surpassing dear,
> Too loved of all to die.
> I know not what hath seared mine eye—"

but no more! It is when we read such stuff as this that the astonishment which Byron never fails to provoke rises as freshly as if it had never risen before. What *was* the secret of his spell? True, this performance was never published, but it is no worse than many that were—and puerile is the epithet which suits them all. We must remember that it was not only the "Public" whom he enslaved: it was critics, men of the world, of culture, of learning. . . . Personal glamour is the only answer to that eternal question: a degree of personal glamour which, it is not too much to say, has never been possessed by anyone else in the world. Even now, when criticism has altered so radically, when the work for which he was then condemned by his most ardent adorers, is recognised as not only Byron's *Weltgedicht*, but, as Brandès justly says, "the only poem of our century which bears comparison with Goethe's *Faust*"—even now, it is the absurd,

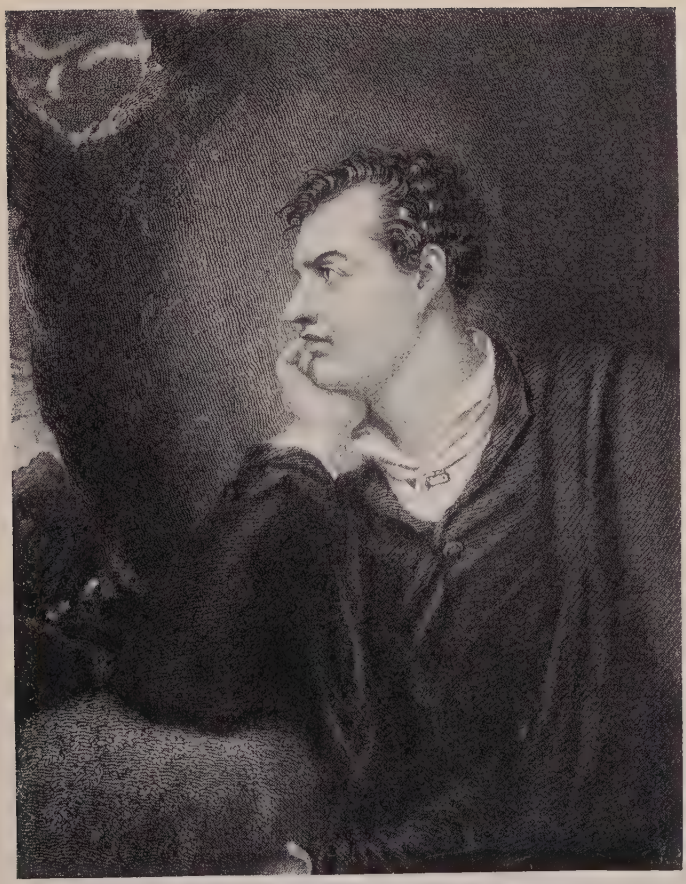
sublime, endearing, dazzling figure, "the theatrical hero, the knot of whose necktie was a model for all the world," the brave, the desperate, the fierce, the sentimental, inflammable, cynical, flippant—it is Byron as Man, far more than as Poet, who enthrals the imagination of everyone who reads even a single book about him. A single book—and there must be hundreds! Besides his own countrymen, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, critics of every cultured nation have "felt the call"—have been driven to write about Byron. . . . Character—absorbingly human character: that was one thing. *Ondoyant et divers* he was, if man ever was. Fascination too—the incalculable element; and then, beauty, "matchless beauty", a beauty about which such men as Walter Scott, Coleridge, the austere Stendhal, were eloquent.

"I never in my life saw anything more beautiful or more impressive. Even now, when I think of the expression which a great painter should give to genius, I always have before me that magnificent head. . . . It was the serene look of genius and power." So Stendhal wrote. And Walter Scott: "The beauty of Byron is one which makes one dream. . . . No picture is like him."

During the two months' "treatment", Byron wrote to Murray:

"I see my *Dama* every day. . . . In losing her, I should lose a being who has run great risks on my account, and whom I have every reason to love. I do not know what I *should* do if she died, but I ought to blow my brains out—and I hope that I should." Amazing—the sincerity of this! There is no pose in these letters: rarely have women the opportunity of reading anything which more deeply proves the truth of his renowned saying: "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart."

By August, the Countess was well, and the Count prepared to move to Bologna. There was nothing agreeable in this plan either to Teresa or Byron. He particularly liked Ravenna; he hated moving—"if I stay six days in a place, I require six months to get out of it"; and, to sum up all, the project of



GEORGE GORDON BYRON, LORD BYRON

From an Old Print

departure set in motion a whole tangle of complications. The idea of following Teresa in the capacity of *cavaliere servente* revolted him. So detestable was the prospect that he actually, to escape it, implored her to fly. But this was to her unthinkable. "To an Italian wife, everything is forgiven but the actual leaving of her husband. To abandon him for the lover seems the natural consequence, in England, of the original error—in Italy it alone *is* the error, and from its rarity seems no less monstrous than odious." She proposed, in place of this horror, to represent herself as dead, like Juliet—to allow herself to be committed to the shroud and vault, thence to escape secretly to his arms, and save the honour of the Gambas and Guicciolis.

Byron's face must have expressed many feelings as he read the letter which made this proposal! There is a half-pathetic, half-ludicrous note in the picture of the golden-haired girl bent over her paper, sketching the gruesome plan—we can guess with what decorative phrases of adoring love—and Byron reading, in solitary annoyance! Teresa's plan was rejected; and as she would not fly, he resigned himself to follow, working off his secret annoyance in letters, as usual.

"My Mistress dear, who hath fed my heart upon smiles and wine for the last two months, set off for Bologna with her husband this morning, and it seems that I follow him at 3 to-morrow morning. I cannot tell how our romance will end, but it has gone on hitherto most erotically. Such perils and escapes! Juan's are as child's play in comparison." . . .

On the 12th of August, we find him, in the best hotel at Bologna, continuing, "not enthusiastically," his new profession of *cicisbeo*. On the night he arrived, he had an hysterical seizure in the Countess' box at the theatre, and—with a tactlessness surely unparalleled in the annals of woman—the Countess had one too! . . . He was almost beside himself just then with enervation and nervous strain. The *Don Juan* worry was in full blast, he was writing incessantly vivid, angry letters to Murray—"amid a thousand vexations", "out of sorts, out of nerves, and (I begin to fear), out of my senses." But fortunately the trial-essay was not a long one. On August 21st, the Guicciolis left Bologna to visit the Romagnese Estates. Byron

remained behind, in a fantastic state of mind, alternating between fury and acute depression. One day he would dash off a violent letter to his critics; the next, would wander up to the deserted house, have her rooms opened, and sit there turning over her books and writing in them. Her copy of *Corinne* bears two inscriptions: one the famous love-letter, written in English on the last page of the volume, on August 25th, 1819.

"My dearest Teresa,

"I have read this book in your garden;—my love, you were absent, or else I could not have read it. It is a favourite book of yours, and the writer was a friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and *others* will not understand them—which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognise the handwriting of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear that I shall exist hereafter—to *what* purpose you will decide; my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish that you had stayed there, with all my heart—or at least that I had never met you in your married state. But all this is too late, I love you, and you love me,—at least, you *say* so, and *act* as if you did so, which last is a great consolation at all events. But *I* more than love you. Think of me sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us—but they never will, unless you *wish* it.

"Byron"

(In later years, Teresa quoted these last words, and added in a note: "*On ne le voulait pas; donc ce ne fut pas.*") The hesitant, melancholy sentences, the strange whim of writing in a language which Teresa did not understand, that sentiment, never the true lover's: "*I wish we had not met*"—how different from the quick word-beat, the directness, the forthrightness of his other letters! Languor and uncertainty impregnate this message with a kind of mental miasma. He used himself to tell of his having had, at

this time, another of his hysterical outbursts in the gardens of the villa, when he was "looking into the fountain." How like Byron is that touch of "the fountain!" And the reason for the outburst is no less characteristic. It was fatal to be loved by him! . . . This fantasy produced the great *Don Juan* stanza :—

> "Oh Love! What is it, in this world of ours
> Which makes it fatal to be loved? . . ."

Yet at this very time, he could write to Murray, "All my present pleasures or plagues are as Italian as the Opera. And after all they are but trifles."

In September, the Guicciolis returned to Bologna; but the Count left soon afterwards for Ravenna, and this time he did not take his wife. The consequences were immediate and remarkable.

On the 18th of September, the Countess left for Venice, accompanied by Byron.

Reasons were given: it was not an elopement—and the reasons were "doctor's orders." Teresa wrote to her husband, asking his permission to go to Venice with her *cicisbeo* in attendance, and the Count consented. Byron might well find him puzzling; the world has since found him something more definite. And indeed, Byron had ere long the word of the enigma. . . . Arrived in Venice, another accommodating doctor pronounced country-air to be essential. Byron had a country-villa at La Mira. The Countess exquisitely delineates the situation: "He gave it up to me, and came to reside there with me." Comment would be profanation of so brilliant an epigram.

La Mira, like Browning's hill-chapel, had had "its scenes, its joys and crimes"; it had housed Marianna Segati and Margarita Cogni, the two low women of the "Carnival of Venice" period; yet it was to La Mira that Byron brought Teresa Guiccioli. Jeaffreson regards this as the proof that she was not (as Moore affirms) "the only *real* love of his whole life, with one single exception."* His point is that Byron regarded her as "nothing more than a highly eligible mistress." But he over-labours it Chiarini, the thoughtful Italian critic of Byron, attaches some importance to this incident, but dismisses it as a blunder. To us,

* The exception being Mary Chaworth, the "lady" of *The Dream*.

blameworthy it certainly appears ; yet, given the man, not of vital significance. Dilatory and impulsive (that fatal combination), detesting " racket " and arrangements, detesting too his present position, Byron's one idea was probably to " get some peace "; and in this aim, he lost sight of every other consideration. Country-air had been ordered for a lady who was—rather inconveniently—here, and there was his villa ! . . . So he saw it, and only so—for good taste and tact were things to which he was all his life a stranger.

Moore, arriving in early October, came in for bits of many people's minds about his illustrious friend. Madame Benzoni, especially, had much to say. " What a pity ! " she lamented, " he had behaved *so perfectly* up to that time." . . . Moore saw a change in Byron, who had again grown stout, and was wearing a moustache, because somebody had said he had a face like a musician. His hair was long, and he wore most eccentric head-gear. Whether all this portended boredom or not, Moore did not at once perceive, but what he did perceive was that decidedly Byron was a little too glad to see him. They went off on excursions together—the *cicisbeo* was given an " evening out," and rejoiced like a schoolboy. Moore watched and perpended. At last, the time came for him to move on to Rome, and he found that Byron was nursing a project of going with him. The Irishman was horrified. He pointed out the cruelty of such a proceeding. " You cannot leave the Countess in such a position : it would be most humiliating to her." The amazing lover sighed and acquiesced.

Before Teresa Guiccioli came into his life, another woman had loved him ; and that woman had characterised him in three words, the only sensible ones, perhaps, which she ever uttered with regard to him. " *Mad, bad, and dangerous to know* "—so Caroline Lamb had spoken. It was her first impression, and it can never have been altered, though she adored him to her dying day. She said of him in her wild unhappy book, *Glenarvon* :—" Oh, better far to have died than to see or listen to Glenarvon ! . . . Is there, in the nature of woman, the possibility of listening to him without cherishing every word he utters ? . . . When he smiled, his smile was like the light of heaven."

THE COUNTESS GUICCIOLI

From an Old Print

He did not often smile on her, poor lady! La Guiccioli was more fortunate, but she paid her price no less. She was unequal to the terrible position of a woman in love with Byron. When Shelley saw her in 1821, two years after this, he wrote: "La Guiccioli is a very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian . . . who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness." Leigh Hunt was blunter—and nearer to the truth. "Madame Guiccioli was a kind of buxom parlour-boarder, compressing herself artificially into dignity and elegance, and fancying she walked in the eyes of the world, a heroine by the side of a poet. . . . I did not think her a very intelligent person. She could smile very sweetly and look intelligently when Lord Byron said something kind to her."

When Lord Byron said something kind to her. The phrase, so unconsciously written, is very pregnant. . . . He was at that time seriously thinking of a return to England, and an attempt at reconciliation with his wife. But he felt himself bound to Teresa. He wrote to Murray in November of this year: "I have got the poor girl into a scrape, and as neither her birth, nor her rank, nor her connections by birth and marriage, are inferior to my own, I am in honour bound to support her through." Rabbe has a stinging comment: "It would be difficult to express more cynically the noble motive which had prevented him from being the support of Claire Claremont." There is no answer to that. The letter to Murray utterly repels, as indeed his letters all through the affair repel, for the amusement they create is an ignoble amusement. There are moments, truly, when the glamour fails—when one utterly despises Byron.

It was now, when his wife had been openly living for a fortnight with the "English lord", that Count Guiccioli at last made a move. He wrote, requesting her to induce Lord Byron to lend him £1000. On loan, of course—at five per cent.; any other terms would be an *avvilimento*. . . . Pity for the girl redoubles as one comes to this episode. Byron was unwilling to lend the money; he was in a penurious mood—perhaps Teresa was extravagant. He had begun to keep a hoarding-box, and to grumble at "that climax of all earthly ills, The

inflammation of one's weekly bills"; and though his friends advised him to lend the money and take the opportunity of returning the lady, he replied that he could not pay so high as that for his frolic, adding that he wagered (and the challenge was accepted) he would "manage to save the money and the lady too."

Here is a letter to Hoppner in the end of October.

"Oct. 29, 1819.

"Count G. comes to Venice next week and I am requested to consign his wife to him, which shall be done. What you say of the long evenings at the Mira, or Venice, reminds me of what Curran said to Moore: 'So I hear you have married a pretty woman, and a very good creature, too—an excellent creature Pray—um! *how do you pass your evenings?*' It is a devil of a question, and perhaps as easy to answer with a wife as with a mistress." . . .

Guiccioli arrived at Venice the first week in November, and demanded his wife. Byron was ready, but the Countess was not. The discussions lasted till December 4th. Byron gave her no encouragement. True, he was ill, but he was not too ill to advise her to go back with her husband. There was a paper of conditions to be signed—the principal article being that all intercourse of any kind whatever should cease between her and Byron. The Countess wept, she pleaded—but she had to go. Milord had won his wager: he had "saved the lady and the money too."

The promise not to correspond was quickly broken. Byron's love-letters are inferior to all his other writings; but they were effective enough to bring Teresa once more to the brink of "consumption". She fretted and pined, she frightened her father and uncle; letters went and came, she grew worse, and finally the astounding gentlemen of the families made up their minds that Byron must be recalled. Her father, Count Gamba, was deputed to write the summons.

But Byron had almost decided to return to England, and had even chosen the route by which he would travel. . . . "He was

ready dressed for the journey, his gloves and cap on, and even his little cane in his hand. Nothing was now waited for but his coming downstairs—his boxes being already all on board the gondola. At this moment, my Lord, by way of pretext, declares that if it should strike one o'clock before everything was in order (his arms being the only thing not yet quite ready) he would not go that day. The hour strikes—and he remains!" The next day came the summons to Ravenna. It was guaranteed that there would be no further trouble with Count Guiccioli. . . . Destiny or Chance? It was beyond all question destiny—that most ineludible destiny of all, which is character.

Before he went, he wrote to Murray on December 10th: "Your Blackwood accuses me of treating women harshly: it may be so, but I have been their martyr; my whole life has been sacrificed *to* them and *by* them." And it is, in an odd perverted way, true that he sacrificed a great deal to women, while desiring all the time to be free of them. Scarcely in one of his love-affairs is any trace of genuine devotion to be found; yet the whole course of his life was swayed by women. "*Besoin impérieux de la femme, et mépris de la femme*": that is the key to the enigma—it is indeed the key in ninety-nine such cases out of every hundred.

The obedient lover flew to his despairing Countess. He had promised to be all and do all that she required—and almost immediately after his arrival, this was the story he had to tell:—

"Ravenna, Dec. 31, 1819.

"I have been here this week, and was obliged to go the night after my arrival to the Marquis Cavalli's. . . . The G.'s object appeared to be to parade her foreign friend as much as possible, and faith! if she seemed to glory in so doing, it was not for me to be ashamed of it. Nobody seems surprised, all the women, on the contrary, were, as it were, delighted with the excellent example. . . . I, who had acted on the reserve, was fairly obliged to take the lady under my arm and look as like a *cicisbeo* as I could on so short a notice. . . . I can understand nothing of all this; but it seems as if la G. had been presumed to be *planted*, and was determined to show that she was not—

plantation, in this atmosphere, being the greatest moral misfortune."

Can there be any doubt that the leading motive in this display of him was vanity? Not so does love act. He took up his quarters in the Guiccioli Palace, occupying a magnificent suite of apartments which he hired from the Count, willing still to make money out of his distinguished friend's entanglement—if not in one way, then in another. The affair was now officially recognised; Byron was learning his new duties, "drilling very hard how to double a shawl"; and consoling himself, as usual, for all boredoms by the writing of letters. But in January, he was already saying to Hoppner: "I have not decided anything about remaining at Ravenna. . . . I came because I was called, and will go the moment I see what may render my departure proper. My attachment has neither the blindness of the beginning, nor the microscopic accuracy of the close to such *liaisons;* but 'time and the hour' must decide what I do."

Time and the hour did, in a sense, decide it; for this was the period of the Carbonari troubles in Italy, and Byron was of course on the side of the insurgents. But he happened to be living in the palace of a nobleman who was profoundly of the opposite opinion. The Count took the obvious course of requesting his wife to dismiss her admirer. She refused. He professed astonishment—"he had supposed the English Milord to be *his* friend." Teresa laughed in his face. He replied by threatening her with a decree of separation, if she did not dismiss Byron. She petitioned the Court for the very thing with which he threatened her!—and the Court granted her plea, ordered him to return her dowry, surrender her carriage and jewels, and pay her £200 a year. She was to reside under her father's roof, or else retire to a cloister. The decree was published at Ravenna in the middle of July, 1820. Teresa left at once, and withdrew to her father's villa, fifteen miles outside the city. She lived there for several months, seeing Byron only about two or three times in the course of each month.

He remained in Ravenna—and kept on his rooms at the Guiccioli Palace! Freedom was not unwelcome to him. He

worked hard, rode daily, threw himself ardently into the Carbonari movement, quickly becoming the chief of his division. The movement collapsed in the early part of 1821. The Gamba family had been active in it, and four months after its suppression, Teresa's father and brother were ordered to quit the Pope's dominions. This meant that she must either go with them, or retire to a convent. At the same time, she heard that Guiccioli was in Rome persuading the authorities to insist upon her either returning to him, or going into retreat. She got the news at her father's villa, and instantly wrote to Byron, in Italian, these very moving and significant words :

"Byron ! I am in despair !—If I must leave you here without knowing when I shall see you again, if it is your will that I should suffer so cruelly, I am resolved to remain. They may put me in a convent ; I shall die—but—but there you cannot aid me, and I cannot reproach you. I know not what they tell me, for my agitation overwhelms me :—and why ? Not because I fear my present danger, but solely, I call heaven to witness, solely because I must leave you."

In what a strain of almost confessed despair does she write ! One word ought to have been enough—and all the imploring words were not enough. Almost incredible in the reading : *He did not go to her*—what can it have been in the living through ? . . . She left her father's house for Florence, while he remained in the husband's palace at Ravenna. He wrote to her on the way —once or twice.

On October 29th, 1821, he left Ravenna to join her at Pisa, writing beforehand to Moore :—"As I could not say with Hamlet, 'Get thee to a nunnery', I am preparing to follow." To her, he wrote, "I set out most unwillingly, foreseeing the most evil results for all of you, and principally for yourself. I say no more, but you will see." And again :—"I leave Ravenna so unwillingly and with such a persuasion on my mind that my departure will lead from one misery to another, each greater than the former, that I have not the heart to utter another word on the subject."

Ill-temper was the only reason for these epistles. More petty, more selfish letters were never written by man to longing woman. What she felt then, and what she represented herself

many years afterwards, as having felt, were assuredly two different things. Love makes blind, but it also makes intuitive; and women, from the letters of the man they love, breathe in almost unconsciously the atmosphere of the mind which dictated them. Byron could not love a woman. That is the simple truth. It would be more agreeable to write about him as a friend, as a comrade, soldier, poet—since, like the rest of the world, we love him still! But it is as a lover that we must for the hour regard him; and as a lover, he drives us to despair. *Femme cramponne*, in the terrible French phrase—yes, she was that. But how young she was, and how she loved him! . . .

We can imagine the days at Pisa. The Casa Lanfranchi, "a famous old feudal palazzo," was infested with ghosts, and all the servants were terrified. There were disagreeables from England —everything went wrong, and he suffered in health accordingly. But there were some compensations. He saw much of Shelley; he met Trelawney, and quaint Tom Medwin (Jeaffreson's "perplexing simpleton"); Goethe pronounced favourably on *Don Juan*, made a comparison between *Faust* and *Manfred*. . . . Of Teresa we hear nothing. Man's love was of man's life a thing apart.

They went to Montenero, a suburb of Leghorn, in May. But plainly he was weary; his spirit was on the wing. . . . It was perhaps as a last device for keeping him with her that Teresa now gave him permission to continue *Don Juan*, which he had laid aside at her request; but alas! in a postscript to a Murray-letter, he wrote: "I had, and still have, thoughts of South America, but am fluctuating between it and Greece. I should have gone long ago to one of them, but for my *liaison* with the Countess G."

Towards the end of December, 1822, they all removed to Albaro, a suburb of Genoa, where they lived at the Villa Saluzzo. Things were going ill. Leigh Hunt, who was then living there under Byron's patronage, watched the situation, and saw that there was no real love in the business. "Whilst he took a perverse delight in mismanaging her, she did not in the least know how to manage him when he was in the wrong." She would nag at him before others, and complain of him behind his

back. In a few months, she began to look old and weary and miserable. "It is most likely that in that interval she discovered that she had no real hold on Byron's affections." Trelawney, Shelley, Hoppner, Mrs. Shelley, all thought the same. The end was near; but with his constant and incomparable glamour, Byron contrived, in every sense of the word, to "do it beautifully."

He got away to Greece. He had always loved the country, and now there was a struggle for freedom there—freedom, the passion of his life, which was so little free! To be a soldier in some great cause, to win fame for deeds, not words, had long been his dream. He had written, "If I live ten years longer, you will see that it is not over with me. I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing, and—it may seem odd enough to say so—I do not think it was my vocation." . . .

He went on board the *Hercules*, on the night of July 13, 1822, with Trelawney, Pietro Gamba, and others—intending to sail at sunrise. But on the 14th, there was not a breath of wind, and they had to endure a day's delay. On the 15th, at 6 a.m., the ship was towed out of port; but the calm continuing, she lay in the offing all day. Towards midnight, a breeze arose, the ship rocked about, and the horses on board, frightened at the motion, kicked down the ill-constructed horse-boxes. It was necessary to put back to port and have them mended. The party went on shore for a second time, and in the evening, finally set sail for Leghorn.

On one of those days he went to the villa at Albaro, whence Teresa had that morning departed. Perhaps he hoped to find her there when he arrived "in the chill grey morning"—but the house was still and dark. A servant came at last: "*La Signora è partita*" . . . He wandered for some time through the empty house; then returned to Genoa, and spent the rest of the day with a friend—"talking very sadly." In the evening he re-embarked, and though unusually silent at first, his spirits gradually rose till he could say to his most familiar comrade, "*I am better now than I have been for years.*"

He never saw Italy or Teresa Guiccioli again. On the 19th of April, 1823, he died of fever at Missolonghi.

The Marquise de Boissy quotes in her book two letters written to her from Greece. She thus describes them: "They possessed that ease and simplicity which not only forbade any exaggeration of sentiment, but even made him restrain its expression." Let us read them. This was one.

"Pray be as cheerful and tranquil as you can, and be assured that there is nothing here that can excite anything but a wish to be with you again." And the other:—"You may be sure that the moment I can join you again will be as welcome to me as at any period of our acquaintance." . . .

What chiefly surprises is her ever having permitted the world to know that he could address her in such ungracious fashion. The publishing of these letters is a side-light upon the "obtuseness" attributed to her by Leigh Hunt.

Let us further quote from one of her letters to Lady Blessington:—

"I am just returned from Mrs. Leigh, Lord B.'s sister. We passed three hours together, always speaking of him. Mrs. Leigh is the most good-natured person in the world; and besides, poor Lord Byron was so fond of her that she is a very interesting person for me."

"*Poor* Lord Byron" . . . there is something about that epithet, as applied to a dead lover, which explains La Guiccioli in a flash. It even prepares us for the fact that after Byron's death, she returned to her husband's protection. After "poor" (?) Guiccioli, too, had died, she married another elderly and still richer French nobleman—the Marquis Hilaire de Boissy, of the new nobility of France. Of him it is related that he never introduced her to anybody except in these words: "*La Marquise de Boissy, ma femme—ci-devant maîtresse de Lord Byron.*" . . .

Almost the only fragment of her conversation which we possess is quoted by Mrs. Crawford in an article in *The Reader* for November, 1906. She was close on seventy. Her companion was the Duc de Persigny; it took place before her second husband's death.

"How is the Marquis to-day? I was very sorry to hear that his health was still uncertain."

"Always, dear Duke; and the idea of being soon obliged to look for another husband appals me."

"You must not look at that so pessimistically. You will always have only too many to choose from."

"Unhappily at my age one cannot always choose."

"I dare not, Marquise, inquire of you your age!"

"*J'ai l'âge de ma chevelure, cher duc.*"

The duke answered, as in duty bound, that her *chevelure* was the youngest and prettiest in France.

"The compliment may have been sincere," remarks Mrs. Crawford. "Her even temper and a fortune that sheltered her from every rough wind that blew enabled her to take life easily." . . .

> "Ah! Love what is it, in this world of ours,
> Which makes it fatal to be loved." . . .

Byron need not have wept, with foreboding for her fate, in the garden at Ravenna.

EVELINA HANSKA

1804-6—1882

A BEAUTIFUL unhappy lady, imprisoned, like any fairy-tale Princess, in a great desolate castle in Ukraine, sat down one day, with fire in her heart, to write a letter to Paris. The letter was for a man whom she had never seen, but to whom she owed the great solace of her existence. He was a writer of novels, and she had read—she had devoured!—everything that he had published. Sometimes he wrote exquisitely, sometimes brutally. There had been the *Physiologie du Mariage*, for example: how cynical, sceptical, ironical! She had not liked it, but she had enjoyed it. After all, marriage—*Her* marriage, for instance? Still, there were things of which it was better not to speak. . . . And then had come—almost as if to mollify the sex which in those days was secretive!—the heavenly-pure and tender *Scènes de la Vie Privée*, where women were exalted to the skies, where life was reduced to an exquisite triple-essence of delicate feeling. What might not be looked for after this—something mystic, etiolated, almost unearthly in its exaltation? And so, when the next book by Honoré de Balzac was announced—was ordered—arrived—we can imagine the eagerness with which the lady untied her parcel from Paris. *La Peau de Chagrin: The Wild Ass's Skin.* A disquieting title, but one may not judge by titles. . . . She opened the book. A scene in a gambling-hell; further on, a scene in—something worse. *Quelle horreur!* She read on greedily: the talk of those amazing young men, the cynicism and *blague* and sentimentality, all mixed up together. . . . No wonder all the world was talking of *Peau de Chagrin!* But then, the tension over, the book at last laid down, our pretty lady remembered her disappointment. It was

to have been a white flower! Which was the real man—sceptic or poet? She *must* find out; she *must* approach him somehow. Strange, that the impulse should be unconquerable now, when one had liked the book much less—but that was anxiety, no doubt: for so superb a talent must not be allowed to spend itself on vilenesses. She would write an anonymous letter to him!

So it was that on February 28th, 1832, Balzac received the first letter of Evelina Hanska—"*L'Étrangère*"—the woman whom he was to love devotedly for seventeen years, and then, at last, to marry.

He had just won success, and he had struggled desperately for it. He was inordinately vain—in the big-hearted, expansive, lovable way—and his vanity hitherto had seemed merely another means whereby the world might wound, might disappoint him. Now at last there came the glory and the joy—the light that never was on sea or land. The *Physiologie du Mariage* had awakened the public. Passionate discussions had raged. Women "hated" it, and though to be hated is a step towards renown, he had resolved to have the women on his side next time, for Balzac could not live without their sympathy—motherly, sisterly, or mistressly. And, so the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* (a few of the tales only which now stand in *La Comédie Humaine*) had embalmed the air—and the women had "adored" them. His future was assured. Editors were fighting for him, he was taking much more work than he could possibly accomplish. It was Success, redoubled by the "boom" which devastated Europe when *Peau de Chagrin* appeared. . . . One might have supposed that in such a flowing tide, Evelina Hanska's little letter would have floated by almost unnoticed. But Destiny had spoken: that little letter—which no longer exists, which indeed was never found by all its eager searchers—was the great event of Honoré de Balzac's life. It was signed *L'Étrangère*, and the postmark was Odessa; she had sent it to the care of his publishers: Librairie Gosselin, Paris—and he, inured to the anonymous admirer's letter, had opened it in gay, vain heedlessness. . . . Thus do the wonderful things happen!

He was thirty-three, and she, twenty-six or twenty-seven; he was unmarried, and she was a wife of ten years' standing, with one daughter, Anna, left of five children born. Evelina Rzewuska, the daughter of a great but needy Polish family, had been one of a numerous progeny, and early in life she had realised that her part in it was to marry "well". Wenceslas Hanski, twenty-five years her senior, but enormously rich, with an enormous castle and an enormous estate in Ukraine, represented the incarnation of that idea; and seventeen-year-old Eve submitted. Life proved solitary, irksome, empty—except for one thing, her little daughter Anna. Her, the mother worshipped: her, the mother never left from the day of her birth to the day of her marriage. It was really the love of her life; but Countess Eve was cultured, lonely—and romantic. Literature of all the arts she cared for most. Expression, expression! Its spell for lonely women lies in that word. Creation the Countess Eves are not so much concerned with; they have their own creating to do—but expression, self-expression, that is the yearning. First vicariously, through reading: then, actually, through writing in one form or another. . . . So it came about; so the letter was composed. A pity we have not the first, the epoch-making! For the two we have are not convincing. How came the first, unless it was widely different, to stand out from the flood? "I should like to know you, and yet I feel I need not, for a deep instinct makes me guess what you are like. I imagine your appearance to myself, and I should say *That's he*, if I saw you." . . . Surely most of us could write like that! The mysterious attraction seems all the more "fatal" when we learn that, on the very day that Balzac got the first letter, he wrote *his* first one to the Marquise de Castries, another anonymous correspondent who had written in September, 1831, to say exactly the same things which Evelina Hanska now said! She was a Botticellian exquisite; and she had the advantage of being on the spot. She soon dropped her anonymity and summoned Balzac to her salon in the Rue de Varenne. He went, and it was not long before he fell madly in love. But the Marquise tired of him quickly. He put her into a book later on—a bitter angry book: *La Duchesse de Langeais*. "Eminently a woman and

essentially a coquette, Parisian to the core, loving the brilliancy of the world." . . . And in Armand de Montriveau, he described himself: his abundant black hair, his virile bearing, "the inward ardour which shone out through his tranquil features. He seemed aware that nothing could oppose his will—possibly because he willed only what was right." . . . Soon enough, whatever he willed, Balzac found his life in a tangle. A marriage had been arranged for him (it never came off): he was dutifully wooing the suggested bride; the Marquise de Castries had been cruel; Madame de Berny, the friend of his youth, the woman twenty years older than himself, who had loved him and drudged for him and watched over him, was heroically sacrificing herself to his future, and acquiescing in the attitude of a "friend". She knew it must be, and Balzac knew it too; but his big tender heart was troubled, and Madame de Castries had made him realise only too well what the other woman must be enduring. *Quelle vie, quelle vie*! And all the copy to be turned out, too, and all the debts to be paid. . . . Those debts were never paid; his life long, Balzac knew no rest from creditors. But on he went stumbling—broken sometimes in health and hope, then again all confidence and looking-forward: "in six months I shall be free": always ardent and intense and excitable, laughing, weeping, working as no human being ever worked before, "fifteen hours at a stretch," killing himself with coffee, with lack of sleep, with violent emotions—getting into publishers' and editors' black books, getting into lawsuits, into love-affairs; "rushing through life irresponsibly, like a mad bull or a runaway motor-car." (How he would have enjoyed a motor-car!)

With *L'Étrangère's* letter, there had sprung up a fresh complication, for it had gone right home, with its reproaches and its pleadings. And the *Contes Drôlatiques* were just coming out! Unhappy author, for he could not answer the letter—there was no address, no name. If he could but explain about those *Contes*! The letter obsessed him. He talked of it to his friends: never was one like it. Then, all of a sudden, he shut up like an oyster: it was as if it had never been. He shut up, no doubt, because a method of communication had been established—by the lady. "A word from you in the *Quotidienne* will give me

the assurance that you have received my letter, and that I can write to you without uneasiness. Sign it *À L'É—h. B.*"

Thus was inaugurated our modern Agony Column—for banal as this arrangement now appears, it was highly original in those days, and her choice of it serves, with the rest, to prove that Evelina Hanska was a remarkable woman.

Balzac answered in the *Quotidienne* for December 9th, 1832 (so it was nearly a year since the first letter), and the announcement was printed as the last *fait-divers*. "M. de B. has received the letter; only to-day has he been enabled to acknowledge it by this paper; he regrets that he does not know where to address his reply! *À L'É—H. de B*". (Punctilious always for that "*de*" to which he had no right at all!) All the advertisements and notices of his books were thenceforth inserted in the *Quotidienne*; the letters continued to come—something else came too, and made a miracle. He was an ardent believer in transmission of thought, suggestion, magnetism—all that we now class together as telepathy: a singular belief at that time, but Balzac was ahead of his age, because he was so observantly of it. That is the mark of great imagination, is it not? to stand in the midst and *see*. . . . Well! he was just beginning his *Médecin de Campagne*, when one day there arrived from far Ukraine a little morocco-bound volume: *The Imitation of Christ*. And in this new work, he was "trying" (as he wrote at once) "to dramatise the spirit of the *Imitation* by bringing it into harmony with our own time." . . . "How did it happen—how are such things to be explained?" he cries, with all the joy of a fanatic. "*Except in that way!*" And of course, as all lovers know, there was no other possible explanation. . . . Lovers? Yes—he at any rate was avowedly that. In this letter, written just a year after her first had reached him, he speaks plainly: "I love you, stranger though you are; and this odd happening is only the natural result of an ever empty and unhappy life, which I have filled with ideas alone. If such an adventure were to come to anyone, it was bound to come to me. I am like a prisoner who, in the darkness of his cell, hears an exquisite woman's voice. . . . Promise me that you won't write to anyone in Paris except me!"—and he implores her to send him a sketch of her own, own room.

Ah! surely the very maddest dream of romance is such a correspondence. "A fairy-tale! Only—I feel it." And is it any realler than the Natural Magic of which Browning wrote? Who can tell, for who can ever know? Did Balzac ever *see* his "Predilecta"—no! he came to her more blind than even seeing lover! *She* saw him—for she was the loved one, not the lover. . . . Few stranger stories there are than this. Vowed to one another, as it were, beforehand; crossing frontiers to meet, and, meeting, separated in five days, yet lovers already (for the *tu* in his letters after the stay at Neufchâtel confesses all to French-trained ears)—how was it, truly, with them both? Did not the very romance impair the romance? Was there not a sense of obligation—of the desirability, at any rate, of "acting-up." . . . Let us not analyse too closely. His, at any rate, was a passionate and unalterable devotion. He was ready for true love—ready and desirous. Madame de Castries had struck and wounded, Madame de Berny was a shadow on the heart, other distractions were too easy, he was satiated with *la vie de boulevard*; and Evelina Hanska was not only cultured, not only intelligent, not only high-born, not only rich, but strikingly beautiful as well. Good Heavens, what could a man want more!

But her feelings—but hers? Is that so easy? Very certainly the story does not say so. The story, when the serious issue came, when *Marriage* loomed before her, may be summed up in one word: hesitation. It would seem that before the first great step there was no hesitation, and that might be stranger still if she had ever hitherto known any joy in life. But she had not. Her husband was pompous, dull, and selfish; she had done her duty as a wife, had borne him five children, had pined in the far cold country, and made no moan. . . . And now! First the wonderful books, next the wonderful letters, last—the wonderful man. . . . How had it been when she first saw him in Neufchâtel on September 26th, 1833?

The Hanski family were at Villa Andrié, opposite the Hôtel du Faubourg, where Balzac stayed. He had alighted at the Hôtel du Faucon, but behold! there was a note waiting which ordered him to be on the Promenade du Faubourg next day from one to four, and he then removed himself to the Faubourg

Hotel, which faced the doors of Paradise — otherwise, Villa Andrié. And remember that, as yet, he did not know her whole name! . . . How did they meet? We have no information, and such moments baffle the fancy. For her, it was easy enough: beautiful, exquisitely dressed, The Sought! But for him? "A small, fat, inelegant person." . . . The thought of her first glance must have daunted him a little? No! staunch Romantic that he was, Balzac would have borne up bravely, even in imagination. And then, his genius! And, since genius is not of the things which "show", perhaps he thought reassuringly of his eyes. (For he had reckoned up all his points long since, when he drew Armand de Montriveau.) His eyes were "incomparable", Théophile Gautier said. Brilliant, piercing—"eyes of a sovereign, a seer, a conqueror"; "like black diamonds, with rich reflections of gold, the whole of the eyeball tinged with blue." Yet soft and lambent too, eyes that could brood and plead as well as dominate. . . . Much consolation for Balzac in his eyes!

One account says that Madame Hanska had a novel of his in her hand, and rushed to meet him, and that all they said was "Eve!" and "Honoré" — but this seems a little over-glib. Christian names do not jump so quickly to the lips, whatever they may have been doing to the pens. . . . Another version is that Eve was bitterly disappointed, and drew back a little—not yet seeing the eyes and the genius. Evidently, when she saw these, they made her forget all else; for Balzac's visit lasted only five days, and, as we have said, his letters afterwards are those of an accepted, a successful lover. "*Ma chère épouse d'amour . . . je t'ai vue, je t'ai parlé; nos corps ont fait alliance comme nos âmes. . . .*" Little room for doubt, is there? that the eyes and the genius had done their work: the eyes and the genius—and the Romantic Situation!

But six days later, Balzac wrote a letter to his sister—in the circumstances, his only possible confidante; and, sadly we say it, it is a letter which we think he ought to have torn into a hundred pieces, with a blush for every piece. Here it is: "There I found all that can flatter the thousand vanities of that animal called Man—and of a Poet, the vainest of them all! But why do I talk of vanity! There is no such thing here. I am happy, very

happy in my thoughts, *en tout bien, tout honneur encore*. . . . The essential is that we are twenty-seven, that we are ravishingly beautiful, that we have the finest black hair in the world, the deliciously smooth fine skin of a brunette, an adorable little hand, a twenty-seven-year-old heart, all innocent: in short, we are a real Madame de Lignelle, and so imprudent that we throw ourselves into my arms in public!

"I do not speak of the colossal riches: what are they when compared with a masterpiece of beauty which I can only compare to the Princesse de Bellejoyeuse, only ever so much better. . . . In the shade of a great oak we gave one another the furtive, earliest kiss of love! Then, I swore to *wait*, and *she*, to keep for me her hand, her heart!"

We do not like it. But it would seem that a victorious lover's letters to a third person ought never to be written. Having been written, they ought never to be sent. Having been sent, they ought never to be kept. Having been kept—we must read them! But women would do well to resist the temptation. It brings its punishment with it—a punishment which needs no definition.

And then? Another meeting at Christmas-time of the same year—a six-weeks' meeting this time, and a definite promise of marriage if she were ever free; then, more letters and new names of love: "Sublime Queen, Autocrat of hearts, Rose of the West, Star of the North, etc., etc., etc."—and jealousies and *gronderies* from her, for she used that weapon incessantly. "Why do you trample all the hopes of our lives under foot with one word?" he cries. "Why do you say again the things that you once wrote, once said. . . . Oh, my love, you play very lightly with a life which you desired for your own, and which has been given you with whole-hearted devotion." . . . Pegasus in Harness, truly! for she idled him as well as tortured him; but, "I accept all sufferings so long as I can see you—for indeed you wounded me yesterday." . . . This note recurs frequently. "I will do what you desire," he writes again. "I will go nowhere. . . . I am so ill that I don't know what can be the matter with me." So it

went; and then she would write kindly, and all, all was forgotten by the big, generous heart: "My God! shall I never make you realise how I love you, my Eve!"

He had made her realise too well.

In 1835, a meeting at Vienna, and more anger, because he worked twelve hours a day at *Le Lys dans la Vallée.* It was a sad year for him; all his family were in trouble in one way or another, Madame de Berny was dying, money-troubles were worse than ever: "Calumnies have ruined my credit: the whole world has fallen on my head. . . . I am working twenty-four hours on end. Lassitude, effort, strain, headaches, worries—here is an epitome of what goes on between the four walls of that white-and-pink room which you know from the description in *La Fille aux Yeux d'or.* And all I have to console me in these labours is a far-away affection which is vexed, at Ischl, about a silly word in a letter while I was in Vienna; and the prospect of going to Wierzchowna and being cruelly treated when, in seven or eight months from now, I shall be almost dying from nervous strain. I might quote that General who said, 'Many such victories, and I shall succumb!'" This was a real quarrel. He even questions her literary taste—about the only weapon he had left himself! The *vous* is used all through; and the misunderstanding lasted long. Many, many letters there are, all full of wounded feeling, and more and more depressed, for troubles were heaped on troubles. "*Oh, pour le coup, trop est trop!*" And she has written about gossip heard through her aunt—and he cries out in bitter, deep reproach: "Your letter has broken me down." . . . One's heart aches for the weary Titan. She might have comforted, might have cheered him; instead, she played the sanctioned "woman's" game. "*Oh, chère, quelle vie!* Do not aggravate my misery by dishonouring doubts. I cannot understand you!" . . . Thus, the bad year 1835-6 drew to an end, with, "There are phrases in your letter which stab my heart . . . but you don't know *how* sad I am. Must I give up going to the Italian Opera" (he passionately loved music), "the only pleasure I have in Paris, because I have no seat but one in a box with a charming and gracious woman? If calumny exacts that too, I shall give up music also. . . . But let us drop this subject. *La*

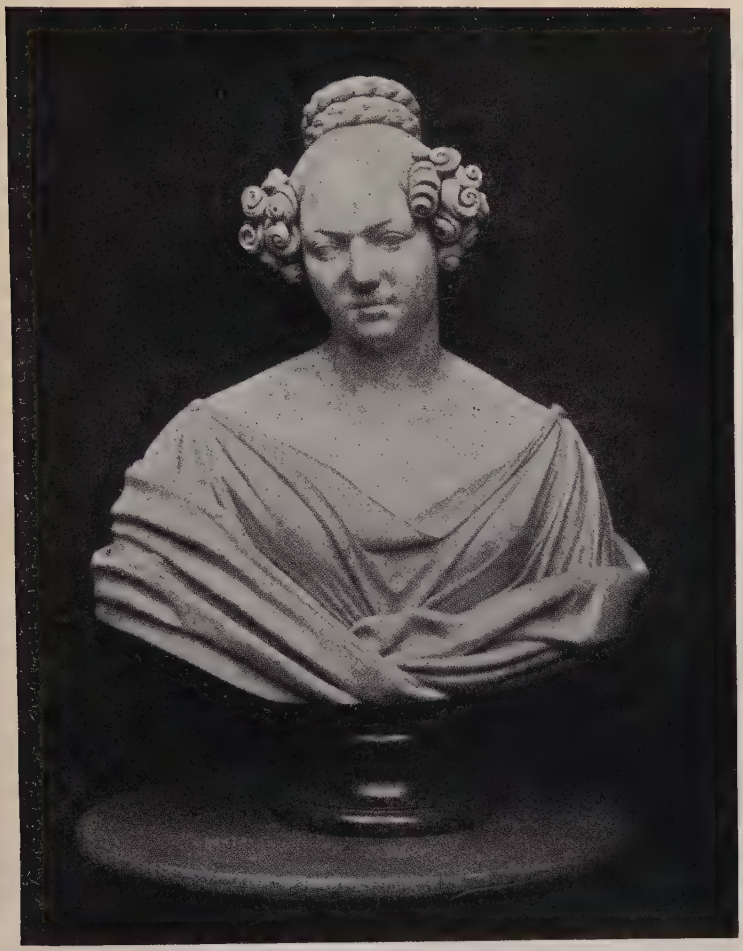
vie de l'âme n'est pas cela." Just that gentle rebuke he makes her!

In January, 1842—seven years after he had last seen her in Vienna—arrived a black-edged envelope. Its enclosure announced M. Hanska's death. At once Balzac wrote off—a sympathetic, ardent, noble letter. "As for me, my adored one, though this event brings nearer what I have ardently desired for almost ten years, I can, before you and God, do myself the justice to say that my heart has been utterly submissive. . . . Involuntary, inevitable impulses there have been. I have often said to myself, 'How sweet life would be with *her*!'—for one's faith, one's heart, one's whole spiritual being, cannot live without hope. . . . Nothing in me is changed. You once said, 'Be patient. You are loved as you love. Do not change; there will be no change here.' . . . Well, we have both been brave. Why should you not be happy now? . . . I should have liked two words *for myself* in this letter? and I have looked for them in vain. Ah! dearest, you have said so much to bid me keep away . . . by now, you will have realised how hard it is to stay in Paris when I have longed for six years to see you. Oh! write and say you will be wholly mine!"

He had read her letter with the prescience of the lover. From that day, began the long cruel hesitation which helped, with all the rest, to kill him. First, it was the daughter Anna who came between. "Alas!" he writes, "Anna has only had my second thoughts, you see; and *I* see that I have not even had the second thoughts from you. But I love you so—perhaps I am unjust? Tell me that my complaint is unjust!" She did not tell him that, for she could not. Then the "terrible aunt," as he calls her, interfered once more. Eve must not go to Paris: *Paris jamais*, decreed the aunt. In the same letter, what does his "Dear Star" write with glacial tranquillity: *You are free.* . . . "I could never have invented this disaster," comes his cry. "You use your daughter as a weapon against me! *If my poor child were taken from me, I should die*, you write. Could you more plainly say 'Your affection would not make life sweet to

me'!" And the old refrain going on all the time of jealousy, jealousy! She will not believe in his *vie de travail*, and he exhausts himself in detailed proofs of work and weary nights and days, till "it makes me ashamed for your intelligence." . . . At last, in July, 1843, she allowed him to come to St. Peters burg and see her. He was at once utterly happy. "She is as young and as lovely as ever, though it's seven years since I've seen her." He wrote daily notes; "Never in my life have I been gladder to live, never have I waked to such joyous mornings." He would gaze at her, enraptured: the black hair, the white arms and hands, the wonderful forehead—"your analytical forehead," as he loved to call it. . . . But then he had to go, and then the tortures recommenced, for nothing definite had been said. "She must settle Anna with a husband first." That seemed imminent in 1844. A Count Georges Mniszech appeared—most eligible. Balzac was keenly interested, but nothing must be done in a hurry, he said, forgetting his own trouble. . . . Then came a terrible fresh blow. Eve was at Dresden, whither he had been told he might go to meet her. All at once arrived a letter putting him off, forbidding him even to write. Some "terrible aunt" again! Nor might he protest. She fulminated horrifically: "he was impatient and overbearing." . . . But in April, 1845, he was at length permitted to go, and instantly rushed off to bliss. Anna and "George" were now engaged, and the whole party came to Paris for a while. Here was Paradise indeed! His joyous excitement knew no bitter remembrance: they were in Paris and he could show his Star everything—his treasures in china, marble, his pictures, his Renaissance furniture . . . for Balzac was a collector of the first rank. Then Baden-Baden together; then Italy. The work had to get itself done as it could. Pictures, and curiosity-shops—those glorious ones at Marseilles!—and Eve. . . . It was the year of his life.

But no work had been done in that *Annus Mirabilis*, and, worst of all, his health was breaking down. Colds, neuralgia, terrible pains in the side. . . . Suspense, moreover, for all the



MADAME EVELINA HANSKA

From an Old Print

excited joy in meetings, waited like a spectre to haunt the partings—for once away from him, her cruel letters would always recommence. Incomprehensible the woman is! Cruelty such as hers has rarely been dealt to even tenderest lover. Was she only undecided? In all else, her will was strong and calm. The truth must have been that love—if it had ever really been at all—had died utterly in Evelina Hanska's heart. Was it vanity alone then that made her keep him tied to her? Was it a kind of fear? a kind of compassion? . . . In 1846, they met in Rome, and once more all seemed hopeful. Anna was soon to be married. Balzac was allowed to buy furniture and bric-à-brac for the future home in Paris—and with the renewed hope, came the revived health, "*et le talent—oh! je l'ai retrouvé dans sa fleur!*" In the same year, the innocent marplot Anna was married at last. *Now . . . now*! But she insisted on going on the honeymoon with the bride and bridegroom! Balzac's agony of suspense turned to despair. And somebody said, half-warningly, that "it was all vanity and pride, that this high-born woman was only playing with her man of genius." He wrote and made a joke of it—but there must have been some terror behind his laugh. . . . He had found a house, however, in the Rue Fortunée * (a good omen!) and was furnishing it divinely: Watteau tea-services, priceless glaze-vases, gilt crystal candle-ornaments. . . . And in 1847, she came to Paris! At last, peace stole into his heart: he actually got some work done, some debts paid, and after she was gone, he moved into the house in the Rue Fortunée. This was indeed a foretaste of the great reality.

But just then an appalling thing happened. The lock of his treasure-casket was forced, and her letters were stolen. Blackmail—the last stroke of ill-fortune! The thief demanded 30,000 francs: else the letters would be sent to the Czar. . . . He managed to frighten the creature, to get them back—but the awful hours had utterly unnerved him. He was far advanced in heart-disease, and he felt that he could not face another such horror. He burnt all the cherished letters.

Towards the end of the year, he got off to see her at Wierzchowna. He travelled for a week without stopping, and

* Now Rue Balzac.

arrived before his own letter announcing his departure from Paris. He was received in Russia with honours innumerable; Wierzchowna, huge and feudal, "like a Louvre," appealed to his imagination. He loved the grandiose always—even the fearful Russian cold pleased him, because it was on the grand scale. . . . But Eve still vacillated, still temporised. That could have been borne, however, since he was with her, but the cold, despite his exultation at its rigours, brought him desperate suffering. His heart had been tried to the uttermost, and the doctors at Wierzchowna knew not how to treat him; so in 1848, when he got back to Paris, he was very ill indeed. And once again, money-affairs were in a bad state: in his luxurious exquisite house, Balzac was soon almost starving. But he still hoped on, still worked, still believed in the coming good. In September, he got back to Wierzchowna. Again he was miserably ill, and again she would give no definite promise. . . . The situation becomes unbearable, for she threatened now to break her word altogether, and he grew iller and iller. . . . Did he realise at last how little she cared?

But the great will, the great love, prevailed. On March 14th, 1850, Balzac and Evelina Hanska were married at Kiev. She was a martyr to rheumatic gout; he was dying of heart-disease, could scarcely move without losing breath, yet—"I am nearly mad with happiness," he wrote.

Not till the end of April did they start for Paris. Their journey was terrible: by the time they reached Dresden, Balzac was almost dead. But Eve found the Dresden jewellers irresistible; she bought herself a magnificent pearl necklace. She wrote to Anna, mentioned incidentally the illness of "our poor dear friend" and went on to describe, in lyric raptures, the new necklace. That ardent style, which had set fire to the unknown author's heart, was now enhancing a bauble, while he lay dying by her side—"our poor dear friend!"

Their married life lasted just five months. We know of it only one thing certainly. He had loved her for sixteen years, and in five months of life together, she changed his tender ardent feeling into something very like her own. . . . Two years after her first letter, he had cried, exultantly, "Only desperate wounds,

like blows with a hatchet, could uproot what is in my heart." That great heart had not reckoned with the "Nightmare Life-in-Death": indifference.

On August 17th, 1850, Balzac died. His mother was with him to the end; his wife had "gone to her own rooms."

MATHILDE MIRAT

(MADAME HEINE)

1818–1883

HE beheld her first in the window of a fashionable glove-shop in Paris. Sauntering down the street, with that slipshod, easy gait which more than anything else betrayed his Jewish origin, Henri Heine glanced aside, and saw a delicate young face, framed in black hair so thick and heavy that it seemed to weigh down the neck, and lit by large deep-set eyes that were blacker still. Those eyes met his—and he knew that he loved her.

The next step must be to know her, and that was easy, for the glove-shop was not for women only. So in he went: a slender, elegant, yet careless apparition, with loose masses of light chestnut hair around a broad high forehead, with light-blue sparkling, laughing eyes, with a nose whose "slight Hebraic curve interfered with its original intention of being Greek", with lips "like two beautiful rhymes": a German Apollo, in short, as Théophile Gautier called him. He bought a pair of gloves, no doubt, for the slender hands which were another of his beauties; and the lovely assistant was kind. He learned that she was just eighteen, that the *patronné* was her aunt, that she came from Belgium—a country-girl. . . . And then, Henri Heine looked at the aunt. One look was enough. She bore her character on her face: it would be an affair for negotiation. He was in funds at the time, but that was not all—there were other assets as well.

> "I am a German poet,
> In Germany well-known;
> When their greatest names are spoken
> Then spoken is mine own."

Heinrich Heine: had she not heard of him? And, if she had, be sure she connected him with the famous millionaire banker of Hamburg, Salomon Heine. . . . How long the affair took, we are not certainly told; but it was arranged. The aunt got three thousand francs, and Henri carried off the exquisite Mathilde.

He was passionately in love. But when had Harry Heine *not* been passionately in love? At eleven, it had begun with "Little Veronica", the pale baby of eight who had given him her sprig of mignonette with a kiss upon it. "I must have a sprig of mignonette on my tomb", he had cried, and tradition says that he remembered that promise at the last. Little Veronica died; he saw the tiny waxen form laid out with the red flowers about it—a child's first sight of death. "Why does Veronica lie so still?" "Because Veronica is dead." . . . He never forgot her; like Byron with little Mary Duff—how like the two men were in many ways!—he knew that, young as they both were, this was something more than childish fancy. Then, at fifteen, had come the strange, red-haired Josepha, "*Sefchen die Rote*", daughter of the Westphalian hangman—solitary, despised, mysterious, wandering alone in her pride. The delicate pale girl, with the mouth so oddly lifted at the corners, and the slender, swaying waist! She would sing him old songs of the people, would tell him weird Hangman's Legends—grim stories handed down from pariah to pariah, and tales of sorcery and magic too, of love-potions, of "ill-willings." . . . And he—a German Jew born in 1799,—did not he also know something of pariahdom? They strayed together, talking thus, while the magic stole along their own veins—the magic that needs no potions . . . and at last they fell into one another's arms, and "stayed a whole hour without speaking." It was from Josepha that he learned to love old song and legend, and learned too all the tragedy, all the mystery, of passion.

Hamburg, next, and the love which helped to make him the greatest lyrical poet in the world: "Molly," the seventeen-yeared cousin, with the golden hair, blue eyes, pink cheeks—the feeble, neutral, lovely little goose who, from one day to another, was

Heine's *Liebchen*, and a good, mediocre burgess's betrothed! It was to Molly that the exquisite and the terrible songs of the *Intermezzo* were all, all written.

"Full many a lovely flower
From out my tears doth spring,
And all my sighs are turning
To nightingales that sing.

And, little one, if you love me,
All the flowers I'll give to you,
And the nightingales at your window
Shall sing their songs right through."

And then:

"The flutes and fiddles are playing,
The trumpets are pealing high;
And there, in the wedding-dance swaying,
My darling love goes by.

The drums are beating and throbbing,
The oboes deeply sigh,
Through it all breaks the moaning and sobbing
Of the angels in the sky."

"It is an old, old story
And yet 'tis always new;
Just now 'tis happening some one
And breaking his heart in two."

He went away for some years, but when he returned to Hamburg in 1823, the pain was as sharp as ever. He wrote to a friend, "I ought never to have come to Hamburg again"—and he wrote, too, the wonderful *Doppelgänger* poem:

"The streets are resting, and the night is kind;
This is the house where dwelt my love so dear;
Long, long ago she left the town behind,
But still the house immutably stands here.

And here a man doth stand and upward stare,
And wring his hands in pain and agony:
I shudder when I see his face, for there
The moon doth show my very self to me.

Pale comrade, how canst bear to ape my pain,
Thou Other-Me, how mimic thus the woe
That caught and rent me, o'er and o'er again,
Here, at this place, this hour, long long ago!"

And the heart-rending *Lonely Tear:*

"What means this tear so lonely
That dims my sight at last?
It must have lingered with me
From old old times long past.

It once had shining sisters
But now they all are shed,
And with my joys and sorrows
Down the wild night are fled.

Fled, too, like misty vapours
The little stars of blue
That smiled those joys and sorrows
My heart, my heart into!

Ah, love itself has vanished
Like breath, beyond recall!
Flow, tear, so old, so lonely,
Flow down, and end it all!"

He saw Molly again, many years after her marriage. "Are you Molly?" he whispered, scarcely knowing her. "The world calls me so." . . . All her first loveliness was gone: she seemed an elderly, tired woman:

"I dreamt that I saw my darling
A woman worn with care,
Withered and thin was the body
That once did bloom so fair." . . .

They took a walk together, and she said "How did you know I was wretched? oh, those wild songs of yours!" . . . She had read the tragic *Ich grolle nicht*, and life had taught her, it may be, enough for her to envy him. *He* at any rate could speak out. . . . They parted after that walk, and he never saw her again. From Hamburg he fled:

"Were ever such hateful, narrow streets!
Such unendurable plaster!
The houses are falling about my head:
I can't get away any faster!"

He got away, but his depression followed him; black days and nights there were, misery, irony, cynicism, despair:

"Almighty God is dead in Heaven,
And dead in Hell's the Devil too."

But that was the cure: to write poetry. He wrote and wrote: much of the same bitter kind, but as he "wrote it out" of himself, he felt the soft airs of spring awakening again in his heart:

"Only wait! these distant echoes
Of my pain will cease their ringing,
And an April-growth of music
From my solaced heart be springing."

It was the *New Spring*, or he called it so; but it was more like summer. Something was gone. Only once and again did the Spring-note sound. . . . There came a procession of fair women: Titianesque, Rossettian, Burne-Jonesian—every type now; and the dream-type too—the Lorelei, the "*Nixe*", the Mermaid who creeps from the sea:

"Sing me dead, caress me dead,
Kiss away the curse of living";

and then, the exquisite Miriam, little Jewess, to whom the loveliest of all his lyrics went:

"Thou art as is a flower,
So fair and pure and sweet;
I gaze at thee, and softly,
Sadly, my heart doth beat.

I long to lay in blessing
My hands upon thy hair,
Praying that God may keep thee
So pure and sweet and fair."

But that ethereal loveliness was only one mood. There are poems here to shudder at, poems that seem to say the last word of cynicism about women—the "Blue Hussar" verses, for instance:

"The Blue Hussars come bugling,
And in thro' the gate they ride" . . .

And then:

"The Blue Hussars go bugling
And out thro' the gate they ride—
I come at once, my love, and bring
A wreath of roses tied.

Faith, 'twas a wild adventure
Quartering that mad lot!
But in thy little heart, dear,
Was room enough, was there not?"

"Aspasias of Gottingen, Messalinas of Amsterdam, Vestals of the Hanseatic Towns" . . . that was his life; and in the middle of the scepticism and the cynicism, suddenly a thing like this, which one cannot read without a contraction of the heart for its sheer beauty:

"Alone in the coach we travelled,
In the dark mail-coach all night;
On each other's hearts we rested,
Joking and laughing light.

But child! when the dawn came dawning,
What was it we trembled at?—
Between us there, between us,
Love, the Blind Traveller, sat."

In 1831, his pleasure and his dissipation were at their height —and this was the song he sang:

"The lovely wishes blossom,
And wither then and die,
And blossom again and wither—
And so, till Life's gone by.

I know it, and it troubles
For me all love and rest;
My heart is so wise and witty,
And bleeding to death in my breast!"

Then, in 1832, came Mathilde Mirat. Let us read the pen-portrait by Alexander Weill (the intimate of Heine for fifteen years), that clever, cynical, erudite Jew, who knew him—and Mathilde—as no one else in the world knew them. . . . She was twenty-three when Heine bought her from the aunt. "Does the reader know the Statue of Phryne in the Madrid Academy? Mathilde might have posed for it. Her plastic beauty was without distinction, but it was perfect of its kind. She was as if made of marble. Her teeth were lovelier than the pearls of

Ophir; and she smiled continually, of course, for she had an exquisite dimple besides. And the smile often became a laugh with malicious little movements of the eyes—a silvery and provoking laugh! She had wonderful crimson lips, so coloured that they looked as if they might have been painted—but they were not: it was a faultless, full baby-mouth. Great brown eyes, smiling, brooding, like the moon through a cloud; dark clustering hair, beautiful feet and hands, a clear, sweet voice—one of her greatest charms." . . . It is a ravishing picture, but Weill has something more to say. "One defect she had—fatal in my eyes: her forehead was oval, not high and broad. She hid it with her hair, but no woman can hide the real shape of her forehead from a connoisseur. This type shows a puerile intellect, little power of reflection, little reason, yet obstinacy without true energy, which easily degenerates into stamping and tears. Mathilde was good-natured to weakness, but she loved 'scenes.'" . . .

"She was a dazzling flower of flesh, a superb female animal, her plastic beauty only equalled by her intellectual nullity," says Paléologue, "and Heine delighted in this: he was tired of brilliant women."

Well, it is an old story, is it not?—this of Henri Heine's wife who never read a line of his poetry. We have all heard it; and we have all accepted, somewhat sheepishly, the tradition of his "happiness". If Weill does not precisely dispel this illusion, he at least tears down many of the veils. Something of the poet's own irony is infused into our feeling. The tale was never very romantic, perhaps, but we had contrived to put what romance there was into the wrong chapter. Now we perceive that the romance lay—not in what Henri Heine enjoyed, but in what he endured.

In 1835, when they had been living together for three years, he once exclaimed, "I am condemned to love only the basest and the foolishest!" . . . All through life his cry to women was "Oh! do not lie" (*O lüge nicht!*) He had no faith: "Woman is bitterer than death"; and again: "What a destiny is mine! To have made of Love a religion, to believe in it as others do in a dogma, yet not to be able to believe in the beings who inspire

it!" 'Tis the old problem of Byron—solved, as we have elsewhere said, by an acute Frenchman: "*Besoin impérieux de la femme et mépris de la femme.*" . . . Poetic justice ,women cannot but feel this punishment of Heine (and of Byron) to be; and they traverse the word *Love* in Heine's indictment!

> "Spirits are not finely touched
> But to fine issues . . ."

nor are spirits meanly touched, but to mean issues.

It is not pleasant to read the details of daily life with Mathilde. For nine years they lived together unwed; then in 1841, so as to make provision for her in case he fell in an impending duel, he married her. After this, he began to write of her in his letters to his mother and his beloved sister Lotte: "She has the noblest and best heart, she is good as an angel." . . . This was putting a good face on it—for in what ways did the "noblest and best heart" display itself? We search every page, and can find no sort of answer. True, she was faithful to him; true, she laughed and chattered when she felt inclined,—and her laugh and her chatter were divinely musical; but that is all. She never spared him a scene, a quarrel; she certainly never spared him a penny, she spent his money like water: "the Sweet Spendthrift" was one of his names for her—she alienated every friend he had, she fed him abominably, she nursed him (in the later years) abominably, and gave the doctor a black eye when she heard him say so; she preferred her screeching parrot to anything else in the world. . . . Once, in the evil years of suffering towards the end, the sick man got it into his head that she might have run away, weary of the tedium of a husband on a Mattress-Grave. "Go and see if Cocotte is there," he said—and when they told him yes, he sank back relieved, the ironic gleam came round his lips: "Then it's all right! She'd never leave *him* behind."

This was Cocotte Number Two. Number One had met his death at Heine's own hands. (For we must in justice show both sides of the picture!) He had suddenly become possessed by a furious jealousy of the bird, and with Weill's connivance, he gave it poison. The three, Henri, Mathilde, and Weill, had been

dining at a restaurant and, coming home, found the dead parrot in the cage. Mathilde uttered a terribly poignant cry—then flung herself on the ground, and exclaimed, "*Me voilà seule au monde!*" The men laughed, somewhat guiltily no doubt, and Heine said, "Am *I* nothing?" She rose, and with a tragic gesture: "Nothing, nothing, nothing!" Still Heine laughed; and Weill, foreseeing tumult, effaced himself. But next day when he arrived, all was calm—only Henri drew him aside: "Never let her know it was I. She would be incapable of forgiving me." She never did know; he got her another Cocotte in a week. . . . The second was perhaps less worshipped; but it would seem, to judge by the later anecdote, that at any rate it was worshipped enough.

"She loved no one really," affirms Weill. "She was a great eater, and great eaters are never passionate—nor orderly. *Tout s'en va par la gueule.*" Mathilde indeed could manage two beef-steaks for breakfast, and half-a-bottle of wine; she liked such simple food, but demanded "big, juicy bits". Heine, on the contrary, was an epicure: it was he who said of one of Véron's famous dinners that it ought to have been eaten kneeling. Theirs was a Bohemian *ménage* in the fullest sense of the word. Neither had a notion of order or economy, and comfort, for all the lavish expenditure, seems always to have lacked. There would be fish for dinner, and the fish, despite the masking sauce, would proclaim itself. . . . "What do you think of the fish, Weill?" Mathilde inquired. Weill, in gala-dress—for he was "going on"—replied with brutal candour that he thought it was bad. She threw the dish in his face. . . . To petrification, succeeded Homeric laughter from host and hostess, the guest listening in difficult silence. "Never mind. She shall be beaten on Monday," promised the husband. "To-day is Monday," Weill remarked—and went home to change. A few days later, Henri said, "I shall be getting jealous! She never does those things to anyone but me as a rule." *Et voilà les maris!* is Weill's scathing comment—though indeed he was a happy husband himself; "but my wife is as different from Mathilde as a dove is from a peacock." . . . Mathilde, in her turn, referred to the incident. "What would you do if *you* were my

husband?" Weill answered with consummate irony: "I should throw the dishes in my own face." Did she understand? She rushed, at any rate—with the delicious laugh rippling behind her—to tell Henri. Henri understood. The sparkling eye encountered Weill's: "There would not be enough dishes for *that*," Henri murmured.

But we must not let Weill's pitiless reporting wholly influence us. Mathilde brought into her husband's life at any rate Laughter: simple childish mirth with no irony round the crimson lips, no sneer to mar the dimple. That meant much to the restless, vibrating spirit, worn with sorrow and the exquisite expression of sorrow. So long as she would laugh, Heine was content. He *did* try—characteristically inconsistent!—to educate her a little; in the early days, Mathilde was actually put to school for a year. They taught her the rudiments of spelling, "a little literature," the four rules of arithmetic, some history and geography. . . . Once out again, she never opened a book, "and died without having read a single line of Heine's poetry or prose." But their walks together, during the incarceration! On Thursdays he could go to see her; on Sundays (the odd school it must have been!) "*il la reprenait chez lui.*" And off they would start down the boulevards, she hanging on his arm, gay as a lark, chattering, laughing in the musical voice, moving with the supple beautiful movement, while he listened to the nonsense and enjoyed the looks of admiration that fastened on her radiant face —for Heine was vain of his "Wild Cat," and liked other men to realise what a conquest he had made.

Mathilde too enjoyed the looks of admiration. Intensely vain was she—vain, and further! "She was quite ready to show her graces": Weill has some astounding anecdotes to tell. There was a little dinner *à trois*, for instance, where they drank to "her beauties seen and unseen", the husband (as he then was) acquiescing. And yet he was desperately jealous. . . . Useless to hope for comprehension of Henri Heine! From what point of view can we regard him? By what standard judge him? From no point of view, and by no standard, we are tempted to cry. He

eludes us every way. When we think we are examining the Ironist of Ironists, suddenly our eyes are dimmed with the tears called up by the Sentimentalist of Sentimentalists. As we sum up dispassionately against the Man, we glance at the dock and find it turned into a tribunal, whence the Knight of the Holy Ghost regards us critically in our ridiculous trappings of "Justice." For life came to him as such a bundle of paradox that it is little wonder he himself was Paradox Incarnate. Heine, the German Jew, who was not christened Heinrich, but "Harry"—after an English friend of his father: he who hated England! Henri Heine, the German who passionately worshipped Germany and lived in Paris, who "took the world as a huge masked ball where I went about with a false nose, and told the truth to the motley dominoes" and then (as cruel Weill reminded him) "married one of the dominoes"; Heine, the "converted" Jew who never was a Christian, the Hedonist on the Mattress-Grave, the sceptic whose last words were "*Dieu me pardonnera: c'est son métier*"; sentimentalist and cynic, libertine and family-man—truly in Matthew Arnold's words:

> "The Spirit of the world
> Beholding the absurdity of men—
> Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
> For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
> *That smile was Heine!*"—

the poet who could write *Du bist wie eine Blume*, and the *Blue Hussars*, the man who distrusted women and married his bought mistress, while she, to complete the paradox of his destiny, was faithful to him not only during his life, but for ever! She lived for twenty-seven years after he died, and she never looked at another man.

Mathilde would weep for the moon, cry, stamp, tear her hair, hit herself—and he soon learned to look on composedly. If no notice was taken, the lovely termagant would sit on the floor and stare for a minute or two, like an ignored, naughty child . . . then a little giggle would break forth, then the enchanting laugh, with the pearly teeth and the dimple: and all would be halcyon again.

But on Mondays—we have the terrible Weill's serious authority for it—on Mondays Mathilde really used to get a beating. Heine would thump her lovely shoulders with his fists, and she (who could easily have prevented him) would suffer it a while, then suddenly fall and, catching him round the ankles, drag him to the ground with her. There they would roll together, struggling for a minute or two . . . then, in the twinkling of an eye, embrace, kiss, laugh, and Mathilde would know that on Tuesday a new hat or a new shawl would be added to her wardrobe. "These scenes," remarks Weill, "no matter how happily they ended, were depressing for those who often witnessed them; but he loved her *comme un damné*." . . . We accept the epithet, do we not? The ugliness would have relieved us from the frequency, we imagine: "once would have been enough," we cry, in our hot British anger. And we should have been mistaken (as Weill was not)—we should have gone away and said that Heine and his wife were miserable together!

They had miserable moments, certainly—or rather, he had. Mathilde, who never did anything she did not want to do, had "scenes"; but they were part of her happiness. She began their life together with a superb outburst of melodrama. Waking in the early dawn, she sat up in bed, and said: "I have given you all, Henri. Don't think that I don't know you bought me. You are the only man who ever took my fancy—and they say Germans are more constant than Frenchmen. *I will never leave you*—whether you love me or not, marry me or not, ill-treat me or not . . . never, never, never!"

"But I don't want you to," murmured drowsy Henri. "I love you."

"I shall stay with you always, always, always!"

"What a scene!" rejoined he, at last waking up. "And what would you do if *I* left *you*?"

"Kill myself at your feet!"

"Well, come to breakfast!" says the lover, a little irritated at the fuss—but she had not finished.

"I shall never leave you. Wherever you go, I'll go. I am yours, because you have bought me, but I've bought *you* too—you know the price. . . . And you are mine for life!"

She kept her word ; she never left him. "But she did nothing to make him marry her," affirms Weill ; "she was glad when he did, but not enraptured." She was not jealous, though he was incessantly unfaithful ; she would even have his Cynthias of the Minute to table with her—they were less lovely than herself, she knew ! What she could not tolerate were his Platonic friendships —such as that with Camille Selden, the "Mouche" of his later, dying years. To Mouche, Mathilde would never be decently civil ; she would barely nod to the little woman with the attractive plain face, would leave her husband's room if she happened to be in it when Mouche entered. Nothing could be more natural than that, we think ; and Mouche was not void of offence in the matter of jealousy, for we find in her little book a very slighting reference to Mathilde's beauty. "The type of woman to whom one feels inclined to recommend less good food and more exercise." Mouche, one perceives, was not a saint—and indeed she does not look like one : a face sympathetic enough, but certainly capable of feline glances, confronts us as we eagerly find the portrait of Heine's last friend. A Platonic companionship—well, it could not have been aught else ; but Heine used the tones, the movements, the words of passion, as we know from his own hand in a letter to her : *Pardon ! You see, it's Death's fault for coming so soon.* "Camille Selden was the Dream ; Mathilde was the Reality," says Paléologue ; "he died between tenderness and *volupté*." *Once more before I die I want to love a woman !*—but his eyes were half-closed in death already, the exquisite hands were twisted and stiff, the lips ("like two beautiful rhymes !") were cold : "My lips are so paralysed that they could not kiss—and it is harder to do without kissing than without speaking." . . .

In December, 1844, Salomon Heine, the millionaire uncle, had died. Although his marriage had been a failure in that direction —Mathilde had seriously displeased the great man—Henri had still hoped that all was well. "I shall be my uncle's heir !" he used to say. But Salomon left him only a sum of 16,000 francs. He dropped in a dead faint when he heard it. Mathilde and Weill had to put him to bed, and "he wept bitterly—*the only tears I ever saw him shed.*" It was a mortal shock : his fatal

illness dates really from that day, although in 1839 the first warning had come, and Heine's pagan health was even then a thing of the past. He had told Weill in 1837 that he considered himself a demi-god; but in 1839, bitterly recalling the boast, he murmured that he didn't now suppose he could be, for he had never heard of the great gods having injections. By 1848, the paralysis was very far advanced. His legs were powerless, he had to lift his eyelids with his finger before he could see, he was incapable of reading or writing for the most part of the day. . . . Death was coming—*had come.* It was so slow, and yet it had been so quick: even in that, Heine could not escape the Paradox! Yet he was neither melancholy nor impatient; the irony gleamed out still, the mind was clear, the imagination vivid, the heart infinitely tender. Women-friends he had in troops; men-friends were few, so one day when Berlioz came to see him, he ostentatiously lifted the eyelid, peered at him, and said with the old sparkle: "What an original you will persist in being, Berlioz!" Weill came, of course—until Mathilde estranged them; then there were family-visits, the dear sister Lotte. . . . Mathilde nursed him with indifferent kindness. "There were no tender words, no exquisite attentions to soothe the endless agony"; and, her duties once over, away she would scurry to dress herself—in the green silk gown, the "Vitzliputzli" gown, because it cost him all that was paid for that wonderful poem!—to walk and saunter in the sun, to visit the Circus and the Little Theatres. . . . Then Mouche would arrive, and he and she would talk of everything in heaven and earth!

His courage, like his patience, was supreme. He had neither religious faith nor philosophical doctrine to help him: he had nothing but his chainless intellectual pride—*Dieu me pardonnera: c'est son métier*—his great soul, his tender heart:

> "My heart is like that ocean—
> Has storms, and ebbs and flows,
> And pearls as fair as any
> Down in its depths repose."

But there were cynicisms still: "I've made my will. All goes to my wife on one condition—that she marries again directly I die. I want at any rate *one* man to be sorry I'm dead." Jeer as he

might, though, he loved her unalterably. She lost him his friends, she worried, tormented, neglected him—still he loved her; though the *Selbstparodie* must sound for that too: "I am so absent-minded that sometimes I mistake another woman for my wife." But then again: "She brightens life and makes it beautiful, consoles and enraptures me, but often gives me a blow to the heart by her extravagance. It is my greatest affliction, and yet I am no miser. I have long ceased to laugh at it." But he belied his own words, for it was not long before he wrote with the laugh in his pen: "We live in the most beautiful and expensive peace!"

Let us abandon the effort to understand, and rejoice in every happy hour he had—for he has given the world so many!

> "Death—Death it is the cool fresh night,
> And Life is but the sultry day;
> 'Tis growing dark, I'm drowsy,
> The day has wearied me with light.
>
> Over my bed there grows a tree,
> Young nightingales therein do sing,
> And sing of love, love only . . .
> Even in dreams it comes to me."

Death came actually at last on February 17, 1856. Mathilde was not with him at the end; but that was not her fault. The nurse had purposely neglected to call her. She confessed it in a letter to his sister, and added, "Do not tell Madame Heine." . . . Evidently, some personal, or perhaps professional, hostility. Poor Mathilde, whom no one liked! For no one ever seems to have liked her much, and assuredly no one loved her—except her husband, whom alone she harmed. He forgave her, and we must do the same. . . . Shall we glance at her, many years after his death—corpulent exceedingly but lovely still—offering his favourite dish at one of her extravagant, untidy dinner-parties? *Mon pauvre Henri*! she would say with a sigh, and help herself plentifully. . . . There, in the little house in the Rue de l'Écluse she had still her Cocotte, and half-a-hundred canaries and three yapping little dogs besides. The din was monstrous, but she did not mind it—she never had minded it, any more than she had minded that her dying husband was tortured by Cocotte's

screech. . . . She was primitive: she had the endurance and the unchangingness of primitive things.

On February 17—the anniversary of Heine's death—in 1883, she was struck down by apoplexy, and died at once. They lie buried together in Montmartre, where the plain stone is with HENRI HEINE on it—nothing more. Mathilde would never have the R.I.P. which his family had loudly demanded. She had known him better than they—known how little creeds had meant to the Knight of the Holy Ghost. "There shall be only Henri Heine." . . . And we look, and remember—and forgive Mathilde at last!

ADAH ISAACS MENKEN

1835–1868

I try to bloom up into the light . . .

THAT motto of her own writing she might well have chosen for her own life, as she chose the words *Thou knowest* for her grave. "A striving, and a striving, and an ending in nothing"—the leading-phrase of pessimism comes back to us, as we read of Adah Isaacs Menken; another phrase, too, comes back—one which may be the last word of despair or triumph: *Character is Fate.* For nothing, no one, but herself could save her; and herself was the traitor always. What is that mysterious drawing of some women always to the evil men? Round this one, men thronged perpetually—those of every type. To her rooms in London came Dickens, Charles Reade, Watts-Phillips, John Oxenford, Algernon Charles Swinburne; to those in Paris, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas; and everywhere that she was came the Bohemian in all his incarnations—in his fineness, coarseness, goodness, badness. Genial brilliant fellows, with pipes for ever in their mouths and kindness for ever in their hearts, rough of speech sometimes, calling her "Menken" *tout court*, yet ready at any moment to stand by her in any trouble. . . . Such men she had at command throughout her life; one man she had towards the end for whom no chivalrous deed, no gentle-hearted devotion, were too knightly—and from such friends or such lovers, she, as it were by fatality, must turn away to those at whom the imagination shudders: "Benicia Boys", Wall Street punchers (whatever that may be), and foul-mouthed "Johnnie Gideons", who would write of her after she was dead without a kindly thought, piling lie upon lie to make better—or worse—copy.

A circus-rider—and one whose performance was denounced in the papers as "at once a scandal and a sham" . . . of such a woman we might say in our haste that surely the Johnnie Gideons were free to write what they liked! She was the notorious *Mazeppa* of Astley's in 1864, when all London streamed over Westminster Bridge to behold her—all male London, that is, "all elderly vicious London," say some chroniclers. It was the elderly men who filled the stalls, who leered from the boxes at the "shameless exhibition" . . . So we read, and push the page away to find the small contemporary photographs: *Menken as Mazeppa.** What do we see? In one, a little figure seated on a tiger-skin, the dark head bent, the hair parted boyishly, a sweet round face beneath—and a form so exquisite that our eyes linger gladly on the gracious curves, and we think we have seen "Menken", until we take up the next picture and behold her lying full length on the tiger-skin, the wonderful limbs outspread. . . .

> "Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
> And thy limbs are as melodies yet"—

inevitably the lines drift into our memory, and others come along with them:

> "When these are gone by with their glories,
> What shall rest of thee then, what remain?
> O mystic and sombre Dolores,
> Our Lady of Pain?" . . .

This much remains. Adah Dolores Isaacs Menken was the woman who inspired that magnificent lyric.

Such was her glory. She had no other. Notoriety she had, friends, admirers, lovers, she had, beauty of face and form, beauty too indeed of soul, mind, heart—and yet, what utter ruin! *I try to bloom up into the light*: that phrase, from all the welter of phrases in her *Infelicia*, is the one which brings the pang for us.

Her baptismal name was Adelaide: her father's name

* Lent by Mr. G. R. Sims from his collection of letters, MSS., and photographs of Adah Isaacs Menken.

McCord. She was born on June 15th, 1835, near New Orleans, at a place then known as Chartrain, and now as Milneburg. Her father was well-off; there were three daughters, of whom she was the eldest. When she was eight years old, he died; reverses had come already, and now came almost destitution. What to do? The widow at first felt hopeless. Adelaide was clever, studious—piquante and fascinating as well, but she was only eight years old. It seemed somewhat early for her to begin the battle of life. Moreover, what could even brilliant little Adelaide do? . . . Suddenly, inspiration came—and doubtless brought a pang with it; but the mother recognised the inevitable, recognised too, it may be, the predestination! McCord had loved above all other arts the art of dancing. All his little girls had been taught—and taught seriously; and all had made astonishing progress, Adelaide naturally being first. It must have been the day for infant prodigies in New Orleans, for Mrs. McCord actually succeeded in getting engagements for all three children, who soon became great favourites under the *soubriquet* of the Theodore Sisters.

That was the beginning. From the first, Adelaide knew the taste of popularity, for of the favourite three she was *the* favourite. And there too, in that early period, we find the double thread, for our eldest Theodore Sister was for ever at her books—studying Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, Spanish, and "translating Homer's *Iliad*". That must have brought a great moment, for we read that the small person of twelve "completed her arduous task with triumph"! Somehow the little girls who do this sort of thing are never lucky. Adelaide McCord began her career as a grown-up by marrying at seventeen "a nobody whose very name has been forgotten, who treated her cruelly, and finally abandoned her." We incline to believe that marriage at seventeen may be reckoned, however it turn out, among misfortunes. Knowledge so soon is bad enough; disillusionment so soon—that hardly bears thinking of. . . . But she had youth at any rate on her side; and she had beauty, courage, ardour. What did she do with all these? We read of no anguish, we read indeed of immediate triumphs of the footlights: first, she flashes out as "Queen of the Plaza at Havana". The

phrase makes its picture for us on the spot, a picture of sunlight, brown faces, dark eyes, mantillas, long lazy days, cigar-smoke—and the morality which goes with all that, drifting like the smoke, easy like the life. Then swiftly with another phrase, the picture changes: "Liberty, Texas—and a newspaper". Only two elements remain: the tobacco-smoke and the morality that drifted with it! The newspaper was short-lived, but she never lost her fancy for that form of activity—it seemed to represent in her mind an outlet, a way of escape, from those footlights where she failed always, despite her strange successes, to find any sort of happiness.

New Orleans, teaching French and Latin in a girls' school, and the publication of a volume of poems came next; then Texas again, and at Galveston, in 1856 (when she was twenty-one), marriage again: the one marriage, it would seem, with which, short-lived as the union was, there came some genuine happiness. For she kept his name, Isaac Menken, to the end, adding an "s" to the "Isaac"; she altered her own name of Adelaide to the Jewish Adah; most striking tribute of all, she adopted Menken's faith and died an ardent Jewess. "She must at that time," writes a friend of those days, one Celia Logan, "have been one of the most peerless beauties that ever dazzled human eyes"; Menken was remarkably handsome also, and moreover, remarkably talented—a musician, a composer. He had fallen desperately in love with her, and had married her against his family's desire. Mystery envelops the breaking of this bond, but the same friend tells us that "in after-years, whoever threw a stone at Adah, it was never Isaac Menken, and she always retained his name. . . . so much of the glamour of first love hung over them both."

It was at this time that she wrote a "magnificent article" in the New York *Churchman* upon the admission of Baron Rothschild to Parliament, which was translated into several languages. Rothschild wrote himself to thank her for it, calling her "the inspired Deborah of her race." Thus, what with the translations and the Baron's glittering journalese, we see that Adah was tasting success again. She was plainly in full career of journalism, for at Cincinnati, she almost edited *The Israelite*,

and there was another joy besides, the study of sculpture, which, when the *Mazeppa* days arrived, proved very useful for her poses. . . . This we take to be the happiest time of her life. She was in the flower of her beauty: dark, moderately tall, graceful and most exquisitely fashioned, with great melancholy eyes, "which strike the beholder and charm him irresistibly." Yes, happy, one likes to think—although it could not last, for with her "nought could endure but mutability."

For three years we hear nothing definite, but it would seem that she returned to the stage, and plainly the Menken marriage was done with, for about this time, she met and married (on April 3, 1859) John C. Heenan, the "Benicia Boy", a prize-fighter, antagonist of Tom Sayers "in the desperate contest for the championship of the world in 1860." Adah's third attempt quite failed to keep the proverbial promise of good fortune. Two years later, we find her trying again with Robert H. Newell, "Orpheus C. Kerr" (Office-Seeker), the satirist of the American Civil War; and, nearly a year after, getting her divorce by an Indiana Court from Heenan, "who had treated her in a brutal and ignominious manner." Well! it was America, and she was "Menken", and one husband was a Benicia Boy . . . yet there are few records of free-love which offend the taste as this does. Two husbands at a time: "*deux maris à la fois*"—that refrain would have seemed scabrous even to Béranger! The endless-chain marriages of America—so to term them—drag very heavily, very wearisomely, upon the sense of humour, do they not?

The punning pseudonymist, "Office-Seeker", in his turn, failed to make her happy, and—shall we finish the husbands?—there came in 1866 the help of another Indiana Court, and (in this case, subsequently) another husband: James or Paul Barclay, "a noted Wall Street puncher."* He was very rich, but not long after their marriage, he "threw out",* and deserted her. In addition to his punching-glories, James (or Paul) has another title to fame: he was Adah's Last Husband.

* We hope some of our readers may be able to translate "Johnnie Gideon" (*Era Almanack*, 1868), from whom we deferentially quote. We acknowledge our own entire ignorance.

It is ill jesting, though very anger makes us jest. How to sympathise? Pity we can give; sympathy—? And alas! if anything from women were wanted, sympathy could alone have been that thing. But no woman's name comes into her life at all. Her sisters we never hear of again, after the childish days; her mother—one knows not! Possibly the best that women could give her *was* pity, and pity, we may be sure, she would have none of without sympathy. . . . Before we dismiss the husbands, let us speak of the jest which most frequently recurs on this subject. "Adah of the Seven Husbands": that is its original form; but the better to point the aptness of the *Dolores* poem, it is often insinuated that the sub-title, *Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*, has reference to her matrimonial trials. The humour of great poets not seldom has these crudities: on that score we are at least quiescent—but in all the writings about her which are scattered through the American and English Press, we have searched in vain for the record of more than five husbands! Unless the chroniclers lost count with Barclay, the too-symmetrical Number Seven must be renounced. We are inclined, ourselves, to be content with the five—all of whom were living at the time of her death.

It was in 1861 that her real career may be said to have begun. In the "legitimate" drama she was quite hopelessly bad. Queen of the Plaza she had been—Frenzy of 'Frisco, Darling of Dayton (where she was made Honorary Captain of the Light Guard) *; streets in mining-towns, nay! the mining-companies themselves had been called by her name, silver lingots had been presented in one place, fifty shares in another, worth one hundred dollars a share.† . . . All this—without one rôle recorded! Plain is the inference, we fear; her own wild words confirm it.

> "'My heritage!' it is to live within
> The marts of Pleasure and Gain, yet be
> No willing worshipper at either shrine;
> To think, and speak, and act, not for my pleasure
> But others'. . . . Fortune's toy!

* "A full length portrait with sword and epaulettes (presented by soldiers) is actually to be seen there." . . . (Pamphlet issued by E. T. Smith, at the time of her engagement at Astley's).

† The shares went up to 1000 dollars each!

Mine to stand on the brink of life
One little moment while the fresh'ning breeze
Steals o'er the languid lip and brow, telling
Of forest-leaf and ocean-wave, and happy
Homes and cheerful toil; and bringing gently
To this wearied heart its long-forgotten
Dreams of gladness.
But turning the fevered cheek to meet the soft kiss of the winds, my eyes look to the sky, where I send up my soul in thanks. The sky is clouded—no stars—no music—the heavens are hushed.
My poor soul comes back to me, weary and disappointed."

Thus, incessantly, interminably, she lamented. It is always the one wail, however the setting may vary. The incongruity of her fate with her aspirations obsessed her: she could think of nothing else, and she could *do* little else but think of it. Sometimes, turning the pages of the monotonous tiny book, one stirs impatiently, doubting if she ever "tried" at all, suspecting that when a mood came over her, Adah would thrust some money into someone's, anyone's, hands—for she was utterly reckless in her unbounded generosity—and then would go and write a poem:

"Lost—lost—lost!
The little golden key which the first angel entrusted to me" . . .
"O! angels, will ye never sweep the drifts from my door?
Will ye never wipe the gathering rust from the hinges?" . . .

But then, the utter pathos of her impotence overwhelms us once more; for it was *she* who could not sweep away the drifts, who could not wipe the rust from the hinges—she of whom the great poet asked:

"Who gave thee thy wisdom? What stories
That stung thee, what visions that smote?
Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,
When desire took thee first by the throat?"

We think of the terrible answering to that terrible questioning. . . . "It makes a goblin of the sun."

Mazeppa—her Mascot, as one might say, if luck had ever seemed to come to her—was first tried at Albany, in 1861.

Hitherto a man had always played the part, but the Manager of the Green Street Theatre there was "tickled" by the notion of a woman-Tartar bound to the back of the fiery steed, and consented to give her a *début*. She arrived on the Saturday before the performance; the company was gathered for rehearsal, and it was found that Miss Menken did not know one word of her part. (She never did learn the words of any of her parts.) So the company was dispersed; she was said to be very tired—and then, she and "Captain" Smith got to work. The trained Mazeppa-horse was called in its private life, "Belle Beauty"—an invention which gives us instantly a flashlight upon the literary quality of this travesty of Byron. And to Belle Beauty's back she was to be strapped, and the strap was to be run through a loop in the band that was securely fastened round the horse's body. The performer held the ends in her hands, and the closer they were drawn, the closer she was held to the horse; directly she let them go, she was free. Smith gave her an exhibition of how it was done: the horse sprang forward from the footlights up an eighteen-inch "run" upon a painted mountain. She watched the feat, all pale and trembling. "I'd give every dollar I am worth if I was sure I could do that." "No danger!" affirmed Smith, but she was not reassured. She begged that the horse, instead of starting from the footlights, should be led up to the "run". It seems extraordinary that Smith, who must have known his business, should have humoured her, but he did—with the appalling result that the disconcerted, trained animal went only part of the way up, then "with an awful crash, plunged off the planking on to the staging and timber beneath." Adah was lifted, almost lifeless, the blood streaming from her shoulder. By some miracle, she was not seriously injured, though a doctor, hastily summoned, forbade her to appear on Monday. "Not appear on Monday! I'm going on with the rehearsal *now*," cries Mazeppa, and so she did—performing the feat quite safely; and, on Monday, rousing a packed house to enthusiasm.

Pittsburg, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New York, followed—then in 1864, London and Astley's.

London behaved most characteristically. Her advent was well heralded by ostentatious shuddering of the Press. There

was at that time a prominent theatrical organ, *The Orchestra*, and it was in *The Orchestra's* pages that the ground was prepared for her notoriety. On August 20, 1864, it came out with the most effective shudder. "The Naked Drama": that abracadabra was well used. "There is a depth of degradation in the drama which England has not yet reached"—that also saw the light. "We hope that Mr. E. T. Smith will keep this exhibition from Astley's . . . a performance which will be hooted everywhere, save in a Yankee audience or among kindred spirits in a Sepoy community." Nothing could be better! And when the following week, there was printed a noble, dignified letter from the Living Scandal herself: "I have been long a student of sculpture . . . my attitudes are selected from the works of Canova. . . . Will your critic suspend his judgment until he has seen me?" . . . why! *The Orchestra's* young man must have felt that much had been accomplished, and Mr. E. T. Smith, that base corrupter of England, and our Mazeppa, that deep student of Canova, must have pronounced it "bully for him"—and bullier still for themselves. When in the first week of October, 1864, the Naked Drama began, that smart young man on *The Orchestra* knew exactly the right attitude to assume. He must have been balked of his shudder—for really there was nothing at all shameless about Mazeppa's white linen *maillot*—but he knew a good deal better than to say so. "It is not so bad as it might be, but it is bad at best": that would do very well. A certain scorn was the note. The "fearful rocks" were very ordinary mountain passes; the steed's hoofs rang very hollow on the boards, and the fiery courser seemed mildly surprised at the torches waved in his face. The play was not lively; its chief charm was the scanty costume of Miss Menken. "The bill informs us that she ascends fearful precipices and fights fearful combats herself, which has hitherto been done by deputy. As she has nothing else to do, we cannot imagine any deputy acting for her." . . . And then, next week, a villainous punning couplet:

> "Lady Godiva's far outdone,
> And Peeping Tom's an arrant duffer;
> Menken outstrips them both in one
> At Astley's, now the Opera *Buffer*."

The brilliancy of this is so dazzling that nobody, we imagine, could attempt to explain it; so it may have been accounted a failure, and on October 29th appeared a masterly paragraph: "Probably American ladies and children could go to Astley's, but English ladies and children have weaker nerves." One knows what would happen nowadays after such a hint; in those days, the result was what we have already seen—to fill the boxes at Astley's with elderly gentlemen, who no doubt left discontented wives and daughters at home, wondering what "the creature" was like. . . . But *The Orchestra* had not exhausted its ingenuity yet. Shortly there began to appear a serial entitled *Adah's Life*, founded upon the pamphlet issued by Smith before she appeared. The pamphlet was a mass of lies, and the *feuilleton* a mass of insults. Few things more objectionable have, we incline to think, been published in England: *The Hawk*, perhaps, or *The Bat*, or some such defunct rag, may have emulated, but scarcely excelled.

In a word, "the Press, one and all, condemned *Mazeppa*"—very skilfully indeed. Nevertheless, there soon appeared in *The Orchestra's* columns two little poems from "the creature's" pen—the verses to Adelina Patti (May 13, 1865), and a little lyric, there called *Never Forgotten*; in her book—*A Memory*. For long she had been writing, and publishing in American newspapers, rhymed lyrics and those strange, unrhymed effusions which form the greater part of the much-discussed volume, *Infelicia*. This is a tiny green book, with no publisher's name upon its title-page. It has been the subject of keen controversy; its contents have been attributed to two of her friends—one, a certain John Thomson, of whom we shall speak later; the other, Mr. Swinburne. How the latter supposition ever sprang into being in any mortal brain is beyond our comprehension. Nowhere is the faintest trace of such great influence to be found. The rhymed lyrics do not call for any serious attention, although W. M. Rossetti included in his Anthology of American verse, those entitled *One Year Ago*, *Aspiration*, and *Infelix*. *One Year Ago* never rises above the level of the Poets' Corner in a provincial newspaper; *Aspiration* scarcely reaches that; *Infelix* has pathos, but little

beauty either of expression or workmanship. One phrase, perhaps:

> "I stand a wreck on Error's shore,
> *A spectre not within the door*" . . .

for the rest, it is merely the old wail, expressed in terms threadbare before she was born. We think of Swinburne's music, richness, strength—the lyric joy and pain, as of the sun over a tossed sea . . . and amazement at the power of gossip to blind men's critical faculties is our dominant feeling! That these little tight, immovable verses, this outworn language and these feeble forms should be attributed to his influence is absurd enough; that they should be attributed to himself, is surely the last word of ineptitude in literary appreciation. W. M. Rossetti, indeed, abandoning that theory, speaks of Edgar Allan Poe. It is only less grotesque. Here is no melody at all—to stop short of Poe's melody! Of the unrhymed irregular forms, better things can be said. They have a certain undisciplined lyric quality. To Walt Whitman's influence they were inevitably traced back. But there is nothing of Walt Whitman, save the irregularity. His magnificent energy, and the magnificent rhythms which belong to it. . . . No! The cuttings from the American newspapers—"long before she came to England"—are superfluous: Swinburne did not write, nor help in writing, *Infelicia*; Poe did not influence, Whitman did not influence. What there is, is all her own.

Or possibly, John Thomson's—that devoted, chivalrous Bohemian of whom we have already spoken. Mr. Ellis H. Ellis, in a letter to the *Referee* (Dec. 27, 1903), says that Thomson "always bristled with poetry. . . . He breathes on every page: he, and he alone, wrote *Infelicia*." This is categorical enough, but it would seem that Mr. Ellis was, partially at any rate, mistaken, for there is the testimony of the newspaper-cuttings (from American journals) of nearly every poem in the little green book. Mr. George R. Sims has a valuable collection of these, and also of the MSS. of *Infelicia*—most of them written in a difficult, pale, sprawling hand (which does not much resemble Adah Menken's), and one, the *Infelix* lyric which closes the

volume, in an exquisite, meticulous script which is known to be John Thomson's. For ourselves, we feel convinced that Adah wrote them: everything that is known of her makes it probable. These wild, unlovely things express precisely the degree of culture, of expression, to which she had attained.

Thomson was at the time Mr. Swinburne's private secretary. He had been "discovered" in his mother's lodging-house by W. Savile Clarke (a lodger), reciting *Paradise Lost* to the black-beetles in the kitchen at midnight. "He went on for a quarter-of-an-hour"—a youth of eighteen, with black hair and big dark eyes: Savile Clarke listened, wondered, finally got tired, and went to bed. But he told Swinburne, who was interested, and engaged the boy as his private secretary. "John would recite quite suddenly, would give no warning. He knew more poetry by heart than ever man did before," says Mr. Sims in the *Referee*; "he was a Bohemian of the old school, the gentlest, most amiable man that ever lived." Thomson came in later life to know Adah Menken, and the result is easy to foresee. A romantic, poetry-stricken young man—a beautiful, passionate, misunderstood woman! The poetry-stricken youth is quickly the love-stricken; and the beautiful woman loved poetry too—she was among the first to recognise the genius of Mr. Swinburne. . . . All the rest follows as a matter-of-course. The young Swinburne comes to her rooms (with other brilliant men), meets her at Bohemian dinners, writes a dainty French trifle in her Album (she kept an Album for her distinguished men's contributions), calling it *Dolorida*:—

"Combien de temps, dis, la belle,
Dis, veux-tu m'être fidèle?—
Pour une nuit, pour un jour,
Mon amour.

L'amour nous flatte et nous touche,
Du doigt, de l'œil, de la bouche,
Pour un jour, pour une nuit,
Et s'enfuit." *

* The verses may be read, in a dainty vellum-bound volume, all by themselves—two short stanzas, and the binding filled up with blank pages!—

And later came that haunting *Dolores* lyric, when the thought of the magnetic, unhappy creature mingled in his brain with the magic in his soul of his own unsurpassed song.

> "Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin,
> But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
> Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
> And then they would haunt thee in heaven. . . .
> O mystical rose of the mire,
> O house not of gold but of gain,
> O splendid and sterile Dolores *
> Our Lady of Pain!"

Is there any need to enquire further?

"One of the most noble-hearted women I ever met in my whole life"—so wrote one friend of those days to Mr. George R. Sims in 1905. "And with warm pleasure I remember many many gentle, womanly acts of goodness and loving-kindness done by her." The letter lies before us as we write, with its further reference to "dear gentle John Thomson." . . . That is a little glory, too, is it not? to have such remembrance after thirty-seven years. *I try to bloom up into the light*: the poignant little phrase "came true" sometimes. She bloomed up into the light for the kindly hearts that never, never would she draw nearest to her own.

On a day in 1868, Thomson waited for her by appointment in John Camden Hotten's office, to consult further about some of the arrangements for the book, which Hotten was to publish for her—and did publish, though without his imprint, after her death. So she never saw the little green volume—another sadness, is it not? For she was so eager about it—so interested! Mr. Sims kindly allows us to copy two letters, given him by Mr. Andrew Chatto:

at the British Museum: *Stanzas in the Album of Adah Isaacs Menken* (privately printed).

* We quote from the first edition of *Poems and Ballads*.

"Wednesday

"DEAR MR. HOTTEN,

"I am much pleased with the interview between yourself and Mr. Ellington yesterday. Your ideas are all excellent, and I am confident that we will have a grand success! I will call at your office to-morrow about two o'clock, if you will be so kind as to be 'at home' to me. I am anxious to see the designs that are to be engraved; also, I would be glad if I might look over the later proofs again, as I was very ill when they were corrected for me.

"You know I never really liked the idea of my portrait being printed, but I am willing to submit to your judgment in all pertaining to our mutual interest. The proofs of the portrait you sent me are wonderfully well engraved.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"*MENKEN*"

(There is no A. and no I.!)

Again:

"Wednesday

"DEAR MR. HOTTEN,

"I am glad we have found another copy of 'Answer Me', I hope you will get it a good place in the book. It is a poem that *I* like, and I believe you will. If you believe in my idea of omitting the 'Karayah to Carl', you might put 'Answer Me' there. However I am sure you will do the best you can for it. Can you get 'Aspiration' in? Do try. When are we to see the final proofs? I am anxious to get the book out. I fear you put others out before me. In that case, we shall certainly quarrel, and that would be vastly disagreeable *to me.* Do hurry those printers, and I shall like you better than I do now. When you have an idle day, let me come and see more of your wonderful old books.

"Yours faithfully,

"*MENKEN*"

The signature is written in huge sloping letters: at its quaintness in style we have already hinted. . . . No! she never saw the little book, with its gigantic facsimile *MENKEN* on the cover, and its dedication to Charles Dickens, and the letter from the great man: "Many such enclosures" (she had sent him some verses) "come to me, but few so pathetically written and fewer still so modestly sent." . . .

Thomson waited two hours that day in 1868, then wrote a note to be given her when she called. She never called. Mr. Sims saw the note recently at Mr. Chatto's—the little tender letter that she never read. . . . Did Thomson see her again? We know not. She had left England suddenly, mysteriously; had gone to Paris, to rehearse for a performance of a play called *Les Pirates de la Savane*. Consumption struck her down there: the seeds had long since been sown. She knew she was doomed some time before she died. A friend told her she looked ill. "Yes—I'm shot," she answered. By August 10, 1868, she was utterly vanquished. She never rallied, but died quite peacefully "in an attic on the fifth floor of a low lodging in the Rue de Bondy, opposite the stage-door of the Porte St. Martin"—watched through the night by a devoted friend, Thomas Buchanan Read, the American poet. They buried her in the Jewish cemetery at Mont-Parnasse; her grave is covered by a slab of grey stone, headed by a small grey monument. At the top is a funeral urn, on one side of it are the words of her favourite saying, *Thou knowest*: on the other, "Adah Isaacs Menken, born in Louisiana, U.S. of A. Died in Paris, August 10, 1868."

> "No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
> The names and tribes of you that slumber,
> No memory, no memorial.
> '*Thou knowest*'—who shall say thou knowest?
> There is none highest and none lowest,
> An end, an end, an end of all."

In the exquisite *Ilicet* stands that phrase, so quoted—the phrase she long had chosen for her grave. . . . But we think of

her *I try to bloom up into the light*—and search the stanzas of that perfect music for a tenderer word.

> " Good-night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow
> To these that shall not have good-morrow,
> The gods be gentle to all these."

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